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A quiet restaurant in Toronto serves up French cuisine with a side of Jewish history. PAGE 7

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Quotable

> *The common answer is that Jews are, or tend to be, smart. When it comes to Ashkenazi Jews, it's true.*

– Bret Stephens of the New York Times, in a Dec. 27 column that was revised online due to one of his sources having ties to white supremacists.

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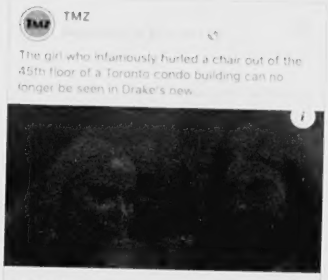
Trending

No days off from being Drizzy

Drake proved that he's the kind of Jew who's willing to work a shift on Christmas Eve, when he surfaced on Instagram late that evening to announce an edit to his new music video, "War." The video no longer shows a short clip of Marcella Zoia, the infamous woman who was recorded throwing a chair off a Toronto highrise balcony. "Certain people we don't condone," he posted with a chair emoji, in response to a backlash over the split-second cameo. Zoia is awaiting sentencing, after pleading guilty to mischief endangering life. Her lawyer said that Drake's deletion was unwarranted, since 20-year-old Zoia makes a living as a model and is meeting her bail conditions while awaiting a sentence of up to six months.

Spoon-bending political futures

Uri Geller got a page in the *National Enquirer* to share his visions for 2020. A cure for cancer, colonization of Mars, alien encounters, a Royal Family shake-up and computers engaging in mind control were the kind of visions that the British-Israeli psychic might have peddled at any time during his half-century career. But he also recently claimed to cause Jeremy Corbyn to lose the U.K. election by giving him a spoon that once belonged to Golda Meir and was infused with Geller's mind power. Back in his hometown of Jaffa to celebrate his birthday, the illusionist received a visit from Israel's first lady, Sara Netanyahu. (Geller has known her husband, Benjamin Netanyahu, since his days in the IDF.)


TMZ
The girl who infamously hurled a chair out of the 45th floor of a Toronto condo building can no longer be seen in Drake's new...
TMZ.COM
Drake Removes Chair-Throwing Girl from Music Video

TMZ/FACEBOOK PHOTO

Death of a musical eccentric

Allee Willis, the artist who died Dec. 24 at age 72, made her musical name with credits on an eclectic set of hits: "September" and "Boogie Wonderland" for Earth, Wind & Fire, "What Have I Done to Deserve This?" by the Pet Shop Boys with Dusty Springfield and "I'll Be There For You," the Rembrandts' theme for the sitcom *Friends*. The royalties supported her other endeavours, like a social networking venture that predated Facebook. In 2018, she returned to her home town of Detroit to put on a live event to mark the revival of the city where her grandfather was an Orthodox rabbi. ■

Compiled by Marc Weisblott of CJN Today, our email newsletter. CJNews.com/today

Gematria

97

The age at which "Popcorn" instrumental songwriter Gershon Kingsley died on Dec. 10. Another of his pioneering Moog synthesizer compositions, "Spooks in Space," was the theme of Canada's *Uncle Bobby Show*.

88

The age at which Ram Dass died on Dec. 22. A psychedelic pioneer, born Richard Alpert, his eastern spiritual influence later incorporated the Judaism of his birth. His mantra also inspired the name of Montreal's CHOM radio.

77

The age at which former NBA commissioner David Stern died on Jan. 1. During his 30 years as commissioner of the basketball league, from 1984 to 2014, he supervised an expansion that included the Toronto Raptors.

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Letters to the Editor

The application process

The Toronto Board of Rabbis (TBR) has two avenues for applying for membership ("Why won't the Toronto Board of Rabbis welcome me?" Perspectives, Dec. 19). The vast majority of TBR members come in through the first route – TBR automatically accepts any member in good standing with one of six established rabbinical associations – the Alumni Association of the Rabbinical School of Hebrew College, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the International Rabbinic Fellowship, the Rabbinical Assembly, the Rabbinical Council of America and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association.

TBR urges interested candidates who do not belong to one of these organizations to pursue membership in any one of them, as such membership will facilitate their acceptance by TBR. As the Jewish community has changed and diversified in recent years, TBR has researched a number of rabbinic organizations, expanding the number of groups whose members qualify for automatic membership. We make these decisions based on the associations' rigorous standards and existing codes of ethics.

The second avenue for TBR membership is available to those applicants who are not members of one of these six organizations. This path consists of submitting an application including information about the candidate's rabbinic studies, covering scope, depth, hours and manner. The candidate must also submit letters of reference from three current TBR members, one of whom must be an executive board member.

As the Jewish community is not homogeneous, TBR prefers that the rabbis writing the letters are not all from the same movement. Consideration is also given as to whether a potential candidate's membership best serves the community at large and would be supportive of TBR's work, since members are frequently called upon to represent the greater Jewish community at interfaith, public and educational events. Pursuing this second type of application does not guarantee acceptance.

The TBR membership process is confidential, as is the membership process of many organizations. TBR does not disclose the fact that an individual has applied for membership, nor does it comment publicly on their application before, during or after the application process is complete. Public knowledge of an unsuccessful application may be misinterpreted as a critique of an individual's rabbinate, which is certainly not TBR's intention – even as it reserves the right to make determinations about applicants' suitability for the organization.

Rabbis David Seed and Michal Shekel
President and executive director, respectively, of the Toronto Board of Rabbis

'Two-faced' Trudeau

I am surprised at the criticism Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has received from many Jewish leaders over Canada's recent vote for an anti-Israel measure at the United Nations ("Justin Trudeau defends anti-Israel UN vote," Dec. 19).

Do they not understand his concern for Jewish-Canadians? Do they not remember that the Pittsburgh shooter was motivated, among other things, by his hatred of U.S. President Donald Trump's friendship with Israel? Trudeau clearly does not wish to jeopardize our security by allowing any hint of Canada being Israel's true friend. And just think, if he is successful in making this clear to the world, he will even lessen our need for security at our institutions.

Joseph Shier
Toronto

For Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to even defend his anti-Israel vote at the United Nations is a travesty of justice. For him to have the audacity to light a menorah after such a move is hypocritical and disgusting.

It's obvious that his reason for voting against Israel was to curry favour with Canadian Arabs and gain support for a Security Council seat. He already knew that he had a good number of Jewish votes because many Jewish-Canadians vote for the Liberals like their parents did in years past. Now he gives us his word that he won't single out Israel at the UN, right after he singled out Israel at the UN. What kind of two-faced farce is this?

If what Trudeau calls "support" means supporting a North Korea, Nicaragua and Zimbabwe-sponsored resolution attacking Israel, then his support doesn't mean very much, does it?

Penny Hassan
Montreal

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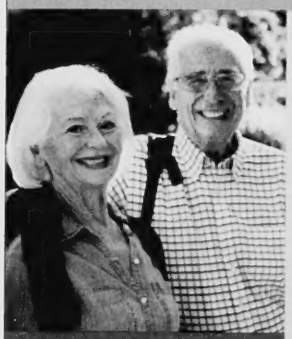

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Rabbi2Rabbi

Getting to the point

Having an accepted, universal definition for anti-Semitism isn't going to change the hearts and minds of those who are already set in their beliefs, but perhaps it can indirectly start to turn the societal wheel.

RABBI MICHAEL DOLGIN
TEMPLE SINAI CONGREGATION, TORONTO

RABBI ADAM CUTLER
ADATH ISRAEL CONGREGATION, TORONTO

Rabbi Dolgin: I was in the United States for the biennial convention of the Reform movement on the day that the White House issued the Executive Order on Combating Anti-Semitism, adopting the working definition of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). Weeks later, exaggerations and polemics continue to rage.

I don't want us to get lost among media pundits and posturers arguing over a particular political statement. I believe that the core issue at hand is that public anti-Semitism has increased significantly over the past two decades. While the reality is undeniable, knowing how to respond effectively is much more complex.

The most heated exchanges about the IHRA definition centre on the fact that it describes some anti-Israel rhetoric and actions as anti-Semitic. Do you believe that this definition can be useful in bringing people of good conscience together? And in your interactions with non-Jewish leaders and organizations, do you find it possible to distinguish between legitimate criticism of Israeli policy and illegitimate rejection of the rights of the Jewish people?

Rabbi Cutler: I am grateful for the IHRA's definition of anti-Semitism, and even more thankful for the accompanying examples. They note that manifestations of anti-Semitism would include "denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination" and "applying double standards by requiring of (the state of Israel) a behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation."

However, amongst those who show up to protest when Israeli military reservists speak on campus or those who place boycott stickers on Israeli products in grocery stores, the definition is meaningless. We will not change their minds with formal language.

It is amongst the great undecided (and mostly uncaring) middle that such definitions may be useful. The IHRA language should help the mainstream Jewish community in setting the parameters – on the left and on the right – of what is acceptable discourse vis-a-vis Jews and Israel.

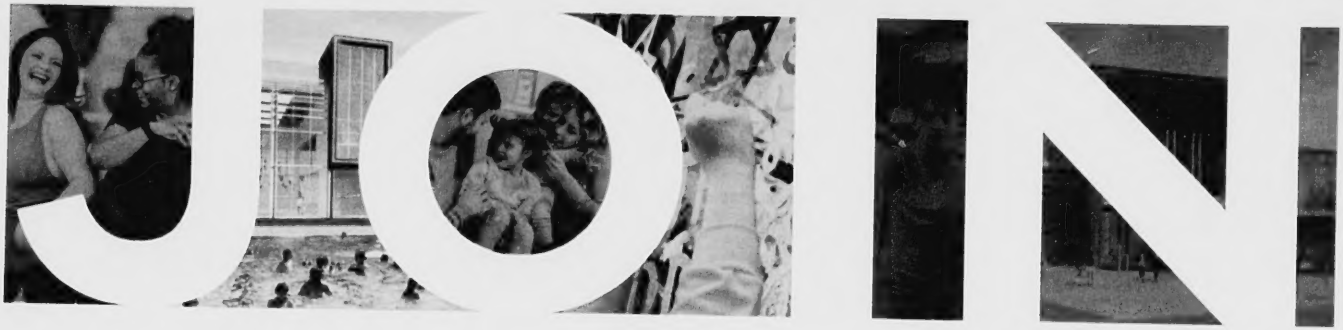
The United States is more accepting than Canada on the question of what is legally permissible free speech. The executive order and recent events closer to home have prompted conversations about what others should be permitted to say and do. Inevitably, as we narrow what is permissible, we will find our own actions and words challenged in new ways. Are you concerned about what a Jewish response to real or perceived anti-Semitism can have on the liberty of individual Jews or the organized Jewish community?

Rabbi Dolgin: While I am concerned about the impact on our freedoms of action and speech, I am even more concerned about our willingness and commitment to fight the issue one person and one incident at a time. The last time I was in Jerusalem, I heard past member of Knesset Einat Wilf speak about the meeting point of anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism. Her 2015 book, *Winning the War of Words: Essays on Zionism and Israel*, contains powerful resources for those who feel unprepared to tackle these complex discussions and disagreements.

In her address, she suggested that the heart of anti-Semitism (and anti-Zionism) is rooted in the historical cultural norm that Jews are expected to be comparatively weak and dependent on non-Jewish power. While she asserts that the place of modern Jews in western society and the rise of Israel can change this reality eventually, she acknowledges that such cultural changes take a very long time. Do you see the strength in our community to defend ourselves and the Jewish state verbally for decades ahead? What can we do as Jewish leaders to prepare the next generation?

Rabbi Cutler: Famed Jewish historian Salo Wittmayer Baron railed against what he termed the "lachrymose conception of Jewish history." Young Jews are well aware of the hatred they may face in the world. And what the news does not provide is made up for with active shooter drills in schools, camps and synagogues.

I am concerned about sharing a lachrymose conception of the Jewish present. We certainly must prepare Jews regarding how to fight anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. First, though, we have to imbue them with a proud, positive Judaism for today. If Jewish educational leaders focus too much on the negative – everyone hates us, the world is against us, nowhere is safe for Jews – why would young Jews choose to remain within the fold? ■



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Unity never gets old

It didn't take long at all – mere minutes, in fact – for the Jewish spirit to proclaim its indomitability amid the carnage in Monsey, N.Y., on the eve of Dec. 29, the second-to-last day of Hanukkah. Five Jews had just been stabbed during a holiday celebration, one incident amid an ongoing flurry of violent anti-Semitism in New York's ultra-Orthodox neighbourhoods. One of the victims, Josef Neumann, remains in critical condition with diminishing hopes that he will ever regain consciousness, let alone walk or talk.

But as his alleged attacker, Grafton Thomas, sped away, the attendees regrouped in a synagogue next door to continue the Hanukkah gathering. "The grace of God did not end," they sang in Hebrew, "and His mercy did not leave us."

Three days later, and just a short drive away, the ultra-Orthodox community put on an even more spectacular display of resiliency, packing over 90,000 people into New Jersey's MetLife Stadium for the *siyum ha-Shas*, marking the completion of the seven-and-a-half-year cycle of daily Talmud study known as *daf yomi*. The stadium, like so many other large venues throughout the world where similar celebrations have been held in recent days (including here in Canada), was filled with the traditional black garb of ultra-Orthodox men (save for a small, but noticeably increased contingent of women, as compared to the last *siyum ha-Shas* in August 2012, and one clever attendee who turned the affair into a living, breathing game of *Where's Waldo?*.

"*Hadran alach, Talmud Bavli, v'had rach alan*," they sang, addressing the Babylonian Talmud – all 2,711 double-sided pages of it – directly: "We will return to you, and you will return to us." That phrase, Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel, the late *rosh yeshivah* of the Mir Yeshivah in Jerusalem, once declared, contains "the most beautiful words that a Jew can say."

Echoing among the masses, the time-honoured lyrics were as much a political statement as anything, a paean to Jewish unity and common purpose. That is, after all, the entire point of the *daf yomi* project.

> "

"What an incredible thing," Rabbi Meir Shapiro declared, promoting the concept to the First World Congress of Agudath Israel in Vienna in August 1923. "A Jew travels by boat and takes (Tractate) Brachot under his arm. He travels for 15 days from the Land of Israel to America, and each day he learns the daily page. When he arrives in America, he enters a place of worship in New York and finds Jews learning the same page that he studied that day, and he gladly joins them.... Could there be greater unity of hearts than this?"

Daf yomi might not be your cup of tea, but it's hard to argue with its message of unity, especially now amid rising anti-Semitism around the world, soaring tensions in the Middle East and divisiveness in our own community. The salient point is that every Jew is called to duty, to do whatever we can to support our communities. We are all responsible for one another. That never changes.

Sixty years ago, M.J. Nurenberger, the first editor of *The Canadian Jewish News*, summed up the task at hand in the paper's inaugural edition, dated Jan. 1, 1960: "*The Canadian Jewish News* will fight the battle of the organized Jewish people on all fronts. That is a solemn pledge. It will fight in the Maccabean spirit – expressing the Jewish refusal to surrender. In this historic effort to secure Jewish existence – politically in Israel, spiritually throughout the world – we need Jewish unity, a disciplined, organized Jewish community. We shall do our share to strengthen it."

Those words are as true today as ever. ■ — YONI

From the Archives
Hockey champions

ONTARIO JEWISH ARCHIVES, BLANKENSTEIN FAMILY HERITAGE CENTRE, UJA FEDERATION OF GREATER TORONTO

B'nai Brith Toronto Lodge [hockey league] celebration at Papio's restaurant in Toronto on Jan. 23, 1961. Photograph by Gordon Mendly.

SeeJN
The Wild Mideast

YANIV NADAN/FLASH90 PHOTO

Israelis ride horses in Wadi Qelt in the Judean desert on Jan. 4. The valley originates near Jerusalem and runs into the Jordan River near Jericho before it flows into the Dead Sea.

Essay

Dreyfus … the restaurant?

Phoebe Maltz Bovy

A few months ago, I passed a restaurant on Harbord Street in Toronto with a curious name: Dreyfus. Could it be *that* Dreyfus?

A glance inside revealed a framed front page of *Le Petit Journal* with the iconic 1895 image of Jewish-French army officer Alfred Dreyfus' military degradation at (or being falsely accused of) treason. And the restaurant, by Leo Instagram says, "…

It turns out that it was in fact named after the notorious Dreyfus Affair, the one that split French public opinion in two at the end of the 19th century; the one rumoured to have inspired Theodor Herzl to make the transition from a journalist to the founder of modern Zionism.

As a rule, French restaurants are, along with French clothing stores and effortless-French-girl Instagram accounts, destinations for unapologetic Francophilia, not for contemplating the more grim aspects of French history. But Zach Kolomeir, Dreyfus' chef and owner, makes a surprisingly persuasive case for this unexpected – and by all accounts unprecedented – form of fusion. I spoke with Kolomeir over the phone, to find out how Toronto wound up with a bistro named after the Dreyfus Affair.

On one level, Kolomeir simply wanted a restaurant name that pointed to France and Judaism. "I wanted something that bridged the history of France and French cooking and the romanticism of France and Paris and all these great little towns with my Jewish background," he explained.

He attended Jewish day school in Montreal and now identifies as "a very cultural Jew," while his great-grandfather was, he tells me, a cantor and founder of Congregation Beth-El in Mount Royal, Que. In that sense, the restaurant's name is itself a cultural fusion, just like the food. "We're doing a pea soup, but instead of using bacon, we use kosher salami," he said.

Cashiering of Alfred Dreyfus by Henri Mayer

But the name Dreyfus is hardly a neutral way to evoke the intersection of France and Jewishness. The affair was, as Kolomeir called it, "the first documented and propagandized version of anti-Semitism." He believes there's a connection between the affair and the Second World War, noting that the affair "kick-started the destruction of the Jewish population."

While the Dreyfus Affair pales in comparison to the Holocaust, it was a time of anti-Semitic riots and overtly anti-Semitic political activity. (When a group calls itself the Ligue antisémite de France, you know whom you're dealing with.)

Yet Kolomeir finds positivity in how the Jewish people survived the affair and other setbacks. As such, he said that the affair "shows the perseverance of Judaism through Europe in that decade, in that era."

In his research, he found numerous anti-Semitic caricatures, such as a "little mouse in the copper pot with Alfred Dreyfus' head on it," and other "references to these low-level animals," such as snakes and rats. "And part of me was kind of like, these are horrible images to portray a Jew as, but we were able to bounce back from this countless times," he said.

The restaurant itself draws from French culinary tradition, including an emphasis on eating seasonal foods (a summer menu item was "lobster la Dreyfus.")

Yet is it not over-the-top Dreyfus-themed in its decor. "It's also a restaurant at the end of the day, it's not a museum," he said.

There are, however, "countless Jewish objects floating around the restaurant," such as "four seder plates" and "the original menu from Goldenbergs in the Marais," a Jewish restaurant in Paris that was attacked in the 1980s.

Subversively, the restaurant made T-shirts for staff and business cards riffing on Dreyfus propaganda, such as "the snake with the cravat," and "the octopus with the moustache." And why not? "As much as it's a serious moment in history," Kolomeir said, "we wanted there to be a little bit of playfulness with it" in 2019.

I asked Kolomeir whether the name has caused any controversy, and he told me that an Alsatian Jewish woman at a home in Toronto objected to the absence of Alsatian food. Kolomeir declined her choice, explaining that this complaint arrived in "the middle of July, while the food in Alsace is very heavy" and thus not suited for a Toronto summer.

Perhaps a Dreyfus-themed French restaurant is too obscure to have inspired outrage. As Kolomeir noted, "not many people are familiar with the overall story." Or perhaps it's the fact that while Kolomeir's restaurant treats the affair with irreverence, it shows a profound respect for both French and Jewish cultures.

I personally love the idea of reclaiming the Dreyfus Affair in this way, and I take pride in the fact that it's a Montreal Jew who's behind it.

The relationship between French Jews and French history, and between English-speaking Quebec Jews and the francophone world, has not always been entirely smooth, but it's hard to grow up in the sphere of French cultural influence and not also fall for its charms.

This restaurant asks: What if you didn't have to pick? Why not eat a delicious French meal and learn about the origins of modern French anti-Semitism at the same time? It shows us that there's no need to cancel France, or treat it with oblivious reverence. ■

Phoebe Maltz Bovy lives in Toronto and is the author of The Perils of "Privilege."

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Saving the planet, the Jewish way

Why an increasing number of Canadian Jews are focusing their attention on environmental issues

ALEX ROSE

Tzeporah Berman is best known for her work as an environmental activist, including as the former co-director of Greenpeace's climate and energy program and the co-founder of the environmental advocacy organization Stand.earth. What most people don't know about Berman — that the very last cause for which she advocated involved her hometown Jewish community.

"I grew up in a very religious household. In fact, my first campaign was to have women counted in the minyan because my parents had passed away and often we didn't have a minyan, so we couldn't say *Kaddish* in the morning," she said. Thanks in part to her efforts, her synagogue in London, Ont., became one of the first Conservative shuls in Canada to permit women in its minyanim.

For Berman, environmental activism is a natural extension of her Jewish values.

The celebration at the opening of Bela Farm in 2016, a project of Shoresh, a Toronto Jewish environmental organization started by young people.

She said it's an important part of *tikun olam*, repairing the world, but also tzedakah, which comes from the Hebrew word for justice. She said her environmentalism is "interwoven" with her Jewish identity.

"I feel like the strength of the Jewish community that I grew up in helped me understand the importance of community organizing, the importance of working together in your community for shared values. And so, I see my environmental activism as being born out of my experience in the Jewish community and upholding Jewish values," she said. "I grew up understanding that tzedakah is not just about charity, it's an expression of justice. It's not about mercy, it's about equity."

Those values are especially relevant when it comes to climate change, because it disproportionately affects those who are least able to deal with it, she said. Berman noted that the areas of the planet that are hit hardest by heat waves and floods are home to the people with the fewest resources, the highest mortality rate and the highest refugee rates. In fact, she claims that more people today lose their homes as a result of climate change than war.

Sometimes, the two types of catastrophes can be very much related, and in ways that especially concern Jews. Dianne Saxe, the former environmental commissioner of Ontario and an environmental, climate and energy consultant, said there is strong evidence that climate change contributed to Syria's civil war.

She said the country experienced its worst drought in 900 years, causing environmental refugees to flee the countryside and flood the cities, which increased civic unrest.

According to Saxe, the entire Middle East is very vulnerable to climate change, including Israel. It's one of the three reasons Saxe believes that Jews should be paying more attention to global warming.

"You should care about the end of Israel. The Middle East is one of the areas that is going to be most heavily affected by the searing temperatures and water shortages that are already beginning to be apparent," she said.

Like Berman, Saxe also mentioned *tikun olam* as a Jewish value that informs her climate activism. Her third reason for championing environmentalism as a Jewish issue is that Jews tend not to do well "in times of loss and destruction and upset."

"We already see an astonishingly large number of people believing that the reports of thousands and thousands of scientists now about the climate crisis are only lies being purchased by Jewish money, and they point particularly to (Jewish billionaire George) Soros," she said.

"So we have a particular amount to lose, both as Jews and as anyone who cares about Israel, and we have the obligation to repair and look after the natural world and we're not doing it."

Saxe called on the Canadian Jewish community to take on more environmental responsibility. A few Canadian organizations are focusing on Jewish environmentalism, but the movement seems to be lagging here when compared to its prominence in the United States.

One of the biggest Jewish environmental organizations in Canada is Shoresh, which is the Hebrew word for root. Risa Alyson Cooper, its executive director, said the organization's goal is to "lead, inspire and ultimately empower our community to be *shomrei adamah* – protectors of the earth." Shoresh aims to achieve that goal through nature-based Jewish education, and by demonstrating that sustainability is a Jewish value.

On its website, Shoresh explains how Jewish texts support the ideas of sustainability and environmentalism. It mentions the work of one of the pioneers of Jewish environmentalism as a modern movement: Rabbi Lawrence Troster, who grew up and began his career in Toronto before moving to New Jersey, where he died last year.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Helping our clients focus on what really matters

Alan Newman

Greg Newman
B.S., MBA, CFP, CIM
Portfolio Manager
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A class visits a Fresh Roots farm in Vancouver. FRESH ROOTS PHOTO

Rabbi Troster intertwined environmentalism and Judaism throughout his entire career. He wrote articles and prayers, helmed and counselled organizations and, in 2005, even attended an interfaith environmental conference in Tehran. He was the only rabbi present.

One of his most famous works is *Ten Teachings on Judaism and the Environment*, in which he cited a multitude of Jewish texts to support 10 different arguments for environmentalism being a Jewish value. They include man's responsibility to properly care for the world God created, the Torah's prohibitions on wasteful consumption and the extinction of species, and the Jewish obligation to save human lives.

Cooper said Shoresh tries to embody these Jewish values through three areas of focus: awareness, action and advocacy. As an example of an awareness program that Shoresh runs, Cooper mentioned the Shoresh Outdoor School. It's open to students from kindergarten through Grade 6 who come to natural areas like gardens and woods and learn about ecology through a Jewish lens.

"For a lot of these kids, it's the first time that they are seeing these intersections between … environmentalism and Jewish learning and living," Cooper said.

When it comes to action, she mentioned the work Shoresh is doing at Bela Farm in Hillsburgh, Ont., as an example of how the organization provides opportunities for people to act on their Jewish environmental values. At the farm, Shoresh runs a native reforestation project, a bee sanctuary, as well as educational gardening and programming spaces. Shoresh co-ordinates with volunteers, day schools and synagogues to bring community members to the farm to see Jewish ecology in action.

Finally, when it comes to advocacy, Shoresh helps passionate Jewish people organize around environmental issues and arranges events on the topic. For example, before the recent federal election, Shoresh hosted an event on the environment in the riding of Toronto–St. Paul's.

"There is so much beauty and deep wisdom in our tradition that can help us navigate the environmental crisis with which we are faced," Cooper said. "If we believe that it is upon us to ensure that we're leaving future generations with a livable earth, then it is upon us to square our actions with our beliefs."

In Vancouver, Ilana Labow is working on the same thing. She is a consultant who focuses on food justice and security, and the founder of an organization called Fresh Roots, which believes in "good food for all." She credits her Jewish upbringing and values for guiding most of her work associated with food and environmentalism, and says she started working in the field during her time at the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies in Israel.

Fresh Roots helps build farms with public schools, facilitates programs for students and is even piloting a universal school meal program in Vancouver. Labow said that in the beginning, teachers were using Fresh Roots gardens to do curriculum work, using them as a resource to teach biology, physics, math and even English.

"And we learned that food and the schoolyard farms became a pathway for so much more. A lot of it became a pathway for individuals to reflect on their daily consumer purchasing choices, for kids to go home and talk to their parents about what they want to see differently at home, in regards to food and in regards to all the other products that they come home to," she said.

On top of that, they also became a means of fostering social connections, Labow said. In an era of increased isolation, the community gardens and farms have helped create and cultivate relationships, and, through those relationships, foster personal agency and empowerment, Labow said.

"Then, from that, feeling confident

> **Ilana Labow**
> **Fresh Roots**

enough to have vision around how they can make the world a better place and feeling confident that they can follow through on that vision," she added.

Labow, who grew up in Chicago, said she believes the Jewish environmental movement can reach the same level of prominence in Canada as it has in the United States. She pointed to the work Shoresh and other organizations have done over the past decade or so to expand the movement in Canada, and also mentioned all the young leaders she has seen.

Joanna Wexler, the chair of the board of directors of Shaar Shalom Synagogue in Halifax, sees that same excitement among the younger members of her congregation. In her various roles in the local Jewish community, which included director of Camp Kadimah and a Hebrew school teacher, she has implemented a number of ecologically minded programs over the years. But recently, she decided to create a youth-led environmentalism committee at her shul. It's still in the earliest stages, but just the idea seems to have energized the younger generation of congregants.

"I don't know that there's been anything that engages the young people in our community as much," she said. "But the fire in their eyes when I started talking about having an environmental movement start within our shul and try to connect with other environmental Jewish organizations across North America. I mean, it was a powerful response to an idea."

Wexler doesn't yet know exactly what the movement will look like at Shaar Shalom, but she was heartened by the impassioned response and the potential it represents, and hopes more synagogues throughout the country will follow suit.

"It is a powerful idea to engage all Jews, never mind young Jews, but especially young Jews – being passionate about things that they are passionate about, and taking a look at them through Jewish lens," she said.

"I think if we can connect our synagogues and our Judaism with things that resonate with the younger generation, then we have an opportunity to engage people in their Judaism for a longer amount of time." ■

Whither the two-state solution?

Michael Diamond

> "Perhaps more disheartening is the lack of trust between Israelis and Palestinians. The steps that had to be taken by the Israelis to protect themselves during the intifadas, including the security fence and the checkpoints, along with a Palestinian educational curriculum that contains large doses of Jew hatred and Palestinian victimhood, and financial incentives for violent attacks, have collectively made the gulf between Israelis and Palestinians enormous."

When the two-state solution was envisioned, as reflected in the Oslo Accords, it seemed like a good idea. It took almost a decade of disappointing facts on the ground to realize that such a solution was not going to happen any time soon. Once I realized this, I, along with many Israelis, moved to the right, preferring to prioritize the safety of Jews to an idea that could not work under current conditions.

Since Oslo, the prospect of a two-state solution has deteriorated further. Several offers that would have led to a two-state solution were rejected by the Palestinian Authority. The Middle East has also been in constant turmoil, with the Syrian Civil War, Iran's hegemonic ambitions, Hamas taking control of Gaza and the rise of ISIS and other Islamist forces. These factors mean that a loss of control over the West Bank would make Israel vulnerable to its enemies.

Perhaps more disheartening is the lack of trust between Israelis and Palestinians. The steps that had to be taken by the Israelis to protect themselves during the intifadas, including the security fence and the checkpoints, along with a Palestinian educational curriculum that contains large doses of Jew hatred and Palestinian victimhood, and financial incentives for violent attacks, have collectively made the gulf between Israelis and Palestinians enormous.

What government would hand over territory and risk the safety of its citizens knowing that its peace partner is poorly led, subject to being overthrown, rejects its right to exist and leads a population that hates and distrusts it?

The withdrawal from Gaza and the emergence of Hamas was instructive. So was the ascendancy of Hezbollah in Lebanon. It does not matter whether there is a BDS movement. It does not matter what various Jewish and non-Jewish groups think about the viability of their version of a two-state solution. When Israelis vote, the priority will be their security, the safety of their families and the preservation of their way of life.

That is as it should be. The originally envisioned two-state solution is political suicide in the short term, because it is state suicide in the longer term. This situation is unfortunate for both Palestinians and Israelis.

It is not good for a people to feel tread upon, even if those who are doing the treading are doing so out of necessity. Nor is it good for Israel to be in a position where it must place its young people in danger in order to protect itself. And yet, the alternative of a two-state solution, without significant changes in Palestinian government and society, is entirely untenable. Positive change for the Palestinians will only arise when their own leadership makes the welfare of its people a priority.

It's time for a paradigm shift in our thinking. It's time to stop using the words "two-state solution" with no real understanding of what that solution would have to look like to be remotely possible for Israel to accept.

It is clear that the nature of a Palestinian state that would be required to ensure Israeli security would be unacceptable to the current Palestinian leadership. There would have to be dramatic changes in Palestinian attitudes, changes to the educational curriculum and an acknowledgement that Israeli security requires continued control over parts of what had at one time been envisioned as being part of a Palestinian state, at least initially.

To continue to speak of a two-state solution in its originally envisioned form as if it has any chance of success in the short or medium term is a recipe for failure, as it undermines the State of Israel and endangers Israelis.

It's time to wake up and smell the all-too-bitter coffee. ■

Hallmark's Hanukkah movies aren't anti-Semitic

A still from the Hallmark feature Double Holiday HALLMARK PHOTO

David Weinfeld

If you have never seen a Hallmark Christmas movie, you're missing out. These made-for-TV movies, which air on the Hallmark Channel, are low budget and often shot in Canada. They feature semi-famous Canadian actors, or former American stars like Danica McKellar – a.k.a., Winnie Cooper from *The Wonder Years* – or Candace Cameron Bure – a.k.a., D.J. Tanner from *Full House* – as well as the now-disgraced Lori Loughlin.

Hallmark Christmas movies are spectacularly formulaic, which is exactly why people love them. A man and woman meet shortly before Christmas. They may be dating other people at the time, or one may be a widow or widower with a child. Regardless, the chemistry between them is instant. The romance meanders for the next 90 minutes, minor obstacles are manufactured and overcome and the two leads fall in love and share a very G-rated kiss before the credits roll. It's a wonderfully predictable Christmas miracle every time.

These movies are very schmaltzy, but schmaltz is my jam. Which is why I and many other Jews were excited when we heard that this holiday season, the Hallmark Channel would be airing two Hallmark Hanukkah movies. *Holiday Date* concerns a non-Jewish woman who brings a Jewish actor, who is pretending to be her boyfriend, home for Christmas.

Double Holiday has a Jewish woman (played by Vancouverite Carly Pope) and her gentile co-worker planning the office Christmas party. In addition, the similarly schmaltzy Lifetime Network offered its own contribution, *Mistletoe and Menorahs*, in which a non-Jewish woman needs to learn about Hanukkah to impress a client.

My excitement was tempered, however, by a slew of negative reviews. Not only were these movies bad, but according to the *Washington Post* and the *Forward*, they were anti-Semitic. Reviews in the *New York Times* and *Alma* did not go that far, but still indicated that the films would leave Jewish viewers with bad tastes in their mouths, like a latke served with ketchup instead of applesauce or sour cream.

Were these assessments correct? First, a warning: if you're looking for woke content, the Hallmark Channel is not your best bet. The movies do suffer from a startling lack of diversity. The romantic leads are always white and heterosexual. People of colour exist only as supporting characters and the LGBTQ community is barely represented at all.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

People who expect feminist portrayals of gender roles in Hallmark movies are bound to be disappointed

Having said all that, let me be clear the Hallmark and Lifetime Hanukkah movies were *not at all* anti-Semitic It's true that *Holiday Date* isn't really a Hanukkah movie. It's a Christmas movie with a Jewish love interest, and even by Hallmark standards, it's not very compelling. But *Double Holiday* is positively delightful, as is Lifetime's *Mistletoe and Menorahs*. Neither is perfect, but both portray Jews and Judaism admirably.

Jewish studies professor Amy Milligan appreciated *Mistletoe and Menorahs*' "positive portrayal of interfaith families as part of normative American family life," something *Double Holiday* did even more effectively, as the main character's happily intermarried sister is fully accepted by their warm, welcoming Ashkenazic parents. By showing multiple menorah lightings, both movies realistically portray the repetitive nature of Jewish ritual observance. Labeling these movies anti-Semitic only makes sense if you are looking for an excuse to be offended.

In an era of increasing anti-Semitism, we Jews cannot throw around such accusations lightly. Conservatives are quick to label legitimate criticism of Israel as anti-Semitic, and that is not helpful. By the same token, calling Hallmark Hanukkah movies anti-Semitic is not helpful.

They could certainly be improved and hopefully next year there will be Hallmark movies with more Jews, and more ethnic diversity and LBGTQ representation. That's a tradition I can get behind for at least eight nights. ■

Do you disagree with our columnists? Have your say by writing to **cjninfo@gmail.com.**

The anti-Semitic roots of the War on Christmas

Dan Rosenberg

Christmas decorations light up the Parliament building in Ottawa in 2018.
JOANNE CLIFFORD PHOTO/CC BY 2.0

"It's the most wonderful time of the year," proclaimed Edward Pola and George Wyle, a pair of Jewish composers. Fifty-six years ago, they penned the hit song about family gatherings, holiday parties and the retelling of the Christmas tale from "long, long ago." It summed up everything that Christians, and non-believers, love about the holiday.

As Jews, many of us love the parties, the music, the reunions and the decorations. While we don't go to church, we often hear the retelling of the Christmas story by watching classic holiday films.

The one tradition that really irks many of us is the dubious claim that there's a "War on Christmas," an idea that is both anti-Semitic and xenophobic.

So I'd like to add the War on Christmas to the list of other bigoted buzzwords that shouldn't be applied to Jews, or anyone else. Then, if people continue to use them, there will be little doubt of their intentions. Here's a primer:

"New York lawyers (and bankers)": those are Jews; "Hollywood Culture": that means Jewish; "secularists" and "internationalists" who are behind conspiracies like the War on Christmas: those are Jews, too.

The idea of the War on Christmas started with one of the founding fathers of American anti-Semitism: automaker Henry Ford. Back in the 1920s, he published a newsweekly called the *International Jew*. It frequently featured blatantly bigoted accusations such as, "Last Christmas, most people had a hard time finding Christmas cards that indicated in any way that Christmas commemorated someone's birth.... People sometimes ask why three million Jews can control the affairs of 100 million Americans. In the same way that 10 Jewish students can abolish the mention of Christmas and Easter out of schools containing 3,000 Christian pupils."

In modern times, Fox News has been airing segments such as Bill O'Reilly's 2016 "Naughty or Nice" list, which praised businesses that use "Merry Christmas" and condemned others that say "Happy Holidays."

In 2017, U.S. President Donald Trump triumphantly proclaimed that, "People are saying Merry Christmas again." But when did people stop saying Merry Christmas? The answer is never. Former U.S. president Barack Obama said it, as did all of his predecessors. People in stores say it, greeting cards say it, even Jews have been known to say it when dealing with Christians over the holiday season.

The issue is that, when meeting someone in a casual public setting, it's not polite to ask if they are Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist or atheist. And even if one does ask, it's not always easy to remember which holidays are celebrated by which faiths and when. We do know that Boxing Day is for everyone, so we say "Happy Holidays." If anything, it is a nod to our consumerism, not an act of war on Christmas.

Why is the idea that some people don't celebrate Christmas offensive to some? If we look at the white supremacist rally Charlottesville, Va., or the perpetrators of the massacres at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, the mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, or the Walmart in El Paso, Texas, we can see that they were all motivated by a fear of immigrants and the anti-Semitic "Great Replacement" theory, which claims that there's a plot to make whites into a minority.

Still, I'm optimistic. Even Trump's own store uses the more inclusive phrase when urging customers to "Shop Our Curated Holiday Gift Guide," where one can order a $90 limited edition Boeing Trump airplane ornament. Did his people wave the white flag and admit defeat in the so-called war?

Let's hope this War on Christmas business has finally come to an end. As a Jewish-Canadian, I love the Christmas season. The lights are beautiful and, when I'm tired of the cold, I can sit back and watch *It's A Wonderful Life* for the umpteenth time (it never disappoints) and celebrate the Jewish Christmas tradition of a Chinese dinner, just in time to check out this year's Boxing Day deals. ■

Dan Rosenberg is a radio producer and presenter. His reports can be heard on Cafe International, Afropop Worldwide and ClassicalFM.ca.

Corrections

Contrary to what was stated in David Roytenberg's column ("Good news for Jews on both sides of the pond," Dec. 26), Linda Sarsour is a political activist and has not been elected to public office. *The CJN* regrets this error.

A Dec. 26 article ("Bob Dylan's existential dreidel") failed to note that it was adapted from the book *God Knows, Everything Is Broken: The Great (Gnostic) Americana Songbook of Bob Dylan* by Aubrey L. Glazer. The book is available for purchase at Amazon.ca. *The CJN* regrets the omission. ■

News

Netanyahu asks Trudeau to denounce ICC probe

RON CSILLAG
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Israel has asked Canada to condemn a preliminary report that says there is a "reasonable basis" to investigate Israeli soldiers for war crimes perpetrated against Palestinians.

A Dec. 20 letter from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau called the conclusions of the report by the International Criminal Court (ICC) "unfounded and dangerous."

Netanyahu's letter, obtained by the *Globe and Mail*, said the ICC has no jurisdiction to investigate because Palestine does not meet the criteria of statehood. He argued that the ICC's decision will only inflame Middle East tensions.

"In light of our special relations and the steadfast friendship between our counties, I urge you to publicly condemn this erroneous decision, to acknowledge there is not a Palestinian state, that the court has no jurisdiction in this matter, which involves political issues to be determined by the parties, and to voice your deep concerns regarding its dangerous ramifications to the court and the region," Netanyahu's letter to Trudeau stated.

It was not immediately clear whether Netanyahu wrote similar letters to other world leaders.

The letter to Trudeau came on the heels of a preliminary report from ICC Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda, which was based on a probe she started in 2015.

"I am satisfied that there is a reasonable basis to proceed with an investigation into the situation in Palestine," wrote Bensouda, adding that, "In brief, I am satisfied that war crimes have been or are being committed in the West Bank, including east Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip."

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, left, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.
ADAM SCOTTI/PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

However, Bensouda first asked the court to determine whether it has jurisdiction over the Palestinian territories.

Asked to comment on Netanyahu's letter, Israel's deputy ambassador to Canada, Ohad Kaynar, said that "as a matter of course, the Embassy does not comment on prime ministerial correspondence."

The CJN's queries to Trudeau's office were referred to Global Affairs Canada. "We do not comment on state-to-state correspondence," Global Affairs spokesperson Krystyna Dodds told *The CJN* in an email.

Canada "is monitoring the ICC's consideration of the situation in the West Bank including east Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip," Dodds wrote, adding that Ottawa's "longstanding position is that it does not recognize a Palestinian state and therefore does not recognize the accession of such a state to international treaties."

She added that, "As a friend and ally of Israel and friend of the Palestinian people, Canada is firmly committed to the goal of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, including the creation of a Palestinian state living side-by-side in peace and security with Israel, achieved through direct negotiations between the parties."

Canada's position on the legal status of a Palestinian state was reinforced in a memo written by its permanent mission to the United Nations in January 2015, a week after Bensouda began her probe.

Canada noted that Palestine does not meet the criteria of a state under international law and is not recognized by Canada as a state.

"Therefore, in order to avoid confusion, the permanent mission of Canada wishes to note its position that in the context of the purported Palestinian accession to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, 'Palestine' is not able to accede to this convention, and that the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court does not enter into force, or have an effect on Canada's treaty relations, with respect to the 'State of Palestine,' " the memo stated.

Israel issued a nearly identically worded memo at the same time.

In addition to investigating Israel, Bensouda's report also says that there is a "reasonable basis to believe" that members of Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups have committed war crimes.

Those charges included intentionally directing attacks against civilians, using "protected persons" as shields, "wilfully depriving protected persons of the rights of fair and regular trial," "wilful killing" and/or "torture or inhuman treatment" and "outrages upon personal dignity."

Part of the ICC's report, which runs 112 pages long, says there is "a reasonable basis to believe" that Israeli soldiers committed war crimes in Gaza during Operation Protective Edge in 2014. The allegations include intentionally launching "disproportionate attacks" and "wilful killing and wilfully causing serious injury to body or health." As well, the report says Israeli authorities may have committed war crimes relating to "the transfer of Israeli civilians into the West Bank since 13 June 2014."

The ICC said its probe could encompass hostilities between Palestinian demonstrators and Israeli troops at the Gaza-Israel border fence in March 2018. The report says the fighting "reportedly" resulted in 200 deaths, including over 40 children, and the wounding of thousands of others.

Included among the wounded was Palestinian-Canadian doctor Tarek Loubani, who was shot by an Israeli sniper while providing medical care. At the time, Trudeau said he was "appalled" by Loubani's shooting and asked Netanyahu to investigate.

An ICC panel of three judges has 120 days to rule on the extent of the court's jurisdiction.

Israel and the United States are not among the more than 120 members of the ICC, though Canada is, and do not accept its jurisdiction, but the Palestinians are recognized as a member state and requested the ICC investigation. ■

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Campus panel postponed over security concerns

ALEX ROSE
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A panel discussion about the current climate faced by Jewish students on campus that was scheduled for Jan. 8 has been postponed after the organizers learned of plans to disrupt the event.

The panel, which was organized by York University's Israel and Golda Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies, was set to take place in downtown Toronto and feature Marc Newburgh, the CEO of Hillel Ontario, Alexander Joffe, editor and BDS monitor for Scholars for Peace in the Middle East, and Mira Sucharov, a professor of political science at Carleton University.

Carl Ehrlich, a professor of biblical studies at York and director of the Israel and Golda Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies, said "online chatter" about disrupting the event necessitated a change in venue due to the unanticipated security concerns, and the change could not be arranged in time for the scheduled date of the event.

The Jewish Defence League (JDL) posted a note online saying that it had successfully got the "event with BDS enabler Mira Sucharov" cancelled, which Ehrlich called "nonsensical," as he expects the event to take place at a later date. He did, however, acknowledge that the JDL caused the postponement of the event by necessitating unexpected security measures.

Ehrlich said that he received complaints about the presence of both Joffe and Sucharov on the panel. Because Joffe's title includes "BDS," apparently some people believed he was a proponent of BDS, "which is completely incorrect," said Ehrlich. "He's the one who monitors BDS activities for the very pro-Israel Scholars for Peace in the Middle East," Ehrlich noted.

Some people also alleged, both online and in emails to Ehrlich, that Sucharov is a proponent of BDS. Yet he noted that Sucharov is a respected member of the Association for Jewish Studies. Likewise, she publicly stated in *The CJN* in 2016 that, "I have gone on record many times opposing the end game of BDS."

"All three of our panelists are pro-Israel," Ehrlich continued. "While they may hold different views about how to achieve peace in the Middle East, this event is about the climate for Jews on university campuses and what steps might be taken to address the issues they face."

Carl Ehrlich

Ehrlich said the panelists were chosen to represent a diversity of opinions within the context of the larger Jewish community about what Jewish students face at university, which he called "an issue of central concern to all of us." He also said that it is the goal of academic organizations to present different perspectives.

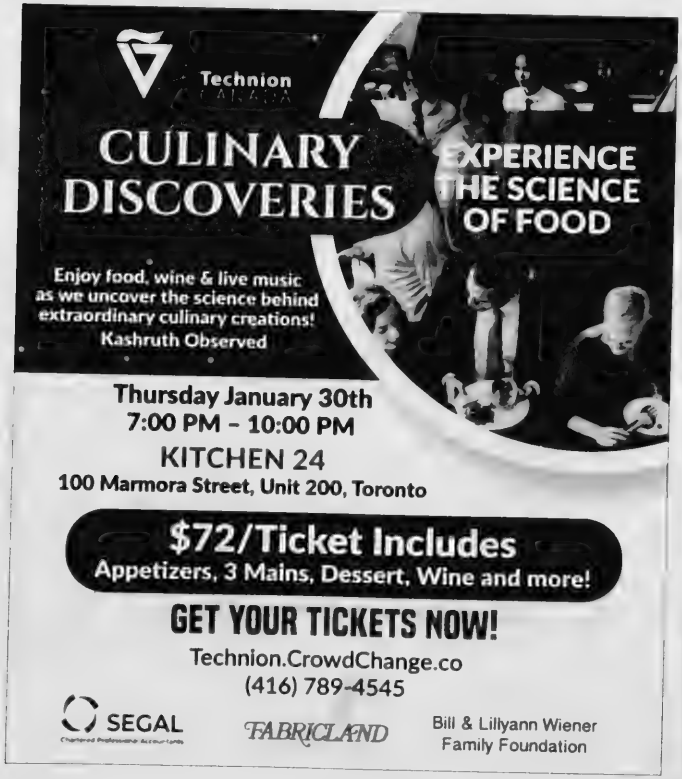
"The people who are objecting to this panel are presenting it as if it were a BDS panel and as if we were trying to advocate a pro-BDS perspective or force a pro-BDS perspective on unsuspecting students – nothing of which could be farther from the truth," Ehrlich said.

"This is not a program that we had planned for a student audience. This was a program we had planned for a concerned community audience to try to bring academic discussion of a particular issue to this audience."

Sucharov said she commends the Centre for Jewish Studies for not buckling under pressure and continuing to commit to the event.

"This is an academic event. It is sponsored by a university centre.... I am a scholar who is active in publishing, speaking, writing and teaching in a Jewish studies context. And when a scholar is invited at the behest of a scholarly centre within a university, nothing more than scholarly credentials should be part of the public conversation as to whether someone should or shouldn't be part of a panel," she said.

"Open discourse within universities and the maintenance of academic freedom is a cornerstone of democracy. And so any attempted interference with that, and any buckling to such pressure, would be undermining the role and purpose of the university." ■



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JOEL JACOBSON
ATLANTIC CORRESPONDENT, HALIFAX

Outspoken Muslim activist Rana Zaman was given a human rights award in early December by the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, which was later rescinded for online comments she made in the past that were deemed to be anti-Semitic and hateful.

A firestorm of controversy has ensued between her proponents and those opposed to her posts, in which she criticized Israel and compared the Jewish homeland to Nazi Germany.

Last summer, Zaman was chosen to be the federal NDP candidate in the riding of Dartmouth–Cole Harbour. When the posts, for which she later apologized, came to light, Zaman was dropped by the party.

When the Human Rights Commission award was announced, her comments were dredged up again and the commission quickly rescinded the award, saying her remarks were contrary to the principles of the award.

Rana Zaman

In a press release, the commission stated that, "The volunteer selection committee (for the award) made the decision based on information that was submitted. It was unaware of public statements made by Zaman that were directly contrary to the principles of the award."

The Atlantic Jewish Council raised objections to Zaman receiving the award, soon after it was announced. In addition, two Halifax rabbis, Rabbi Yakov Kerzner of Beth Israel Synagogue and Rabbi Gary Karlin of Shaar Shalom Congregation, co-wrote a letter to the editor of the Halifax *Chronicle Herald*, in which they condemned Zaman's comparison of Israel to Nazi Germany and recommended the award be rescinded, which it was soon after.

Zaman arrived in Nova Scotia from Pakistan in the 1970s at a young age and has been lauded for her volunteer work in her community. She's volunteered with refugee and women's support groups.

Rabbi Kerzner told the *Chronicle Herald* that he commends Zaman for the good work she does, but believes that winning an award such as this does not set a good precedent. He praised the commission for "seeing the benefit of searching for models of behaviour that promote good will and fellowship, rather than seeking divisiveness. We must fight all forms of racism and bigotry and remove hateful propaganda, which only helps promote divisions, rather than heal them."

Zaman wants to meet with the Atlantic Jewish Council to address its concerns and help heal any pain she caused.

Naomi Rosenfeld, the executive director of the Atlantic Jewish Council, told *The CJN* that, "Our door is always open. Zaman and I spoke last summer after the original remarks came to light and I let her know what we felt was inappropriate and what our definition of anti-Semitism is. We will certainly be willing to speak again in good faith."

Despite protests from Zaman's supporters, a Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission spokesperson said the commission is not considering giving the award back to her. ■

Reitman was head of Montreal fashion chain

CJN STAFF

Jeremy Reitman, the head of the eponymous Montreal-based women's wear retail chain founded by his grandparents, is being remembered as an astute businessman and a man filled with joie de vivre.

He, like his family, was a major supporter of Jewish and Israel-related causes.

Reitman, the chairman and chief executive officer of Reitmans (Canada) Limited, died peacefully in Florida on Dec. 28. In a brief announcement the following day, the company stated that "the board of directors, management team and employees of the company extend their deepest sympathies to the Reitman family." He was 72.

Among the many condolences posted on the website of Paperman & Sons, where Reitman's funeral was held on Jan. 2, Jane and Larry Plotnick wrote: "Jeremy was such a special person. Always a smile. Always a joke and story to tell. Always the patriarch. Always a business and community leader. And, perhaps most importantly, always a mensch.

"We are certain that Jeremy, with all his colourful ways, will live on in the hearts of everyone who knew him."

Alvin Segal, the chairman and CEO of Peerless Clothing Inc., stated that, "Jeremy lived his life the way he wanted. He had a lot of friends, but I think he and I had a special friendship. He will be missed."

According to the obituary notice, Reitman, the son of the late Betty and Jack Reitman, was an alumnus of Dartmouth College and the McGill University law school. He was a former board member of McGill, the Bank of Montreal and Provigo. He was also "a passionate golfer, skier, Moishe's regular, toastmaster and philatelist."

Jeremy Reitman, left, is seen with his brother Stephen Reitman. REITMANS PHOTO

He is survived by his brother Stephen, Reitmans' president and COO, sister Sarah Rubin, partner Penelope Rudnikoff, children Alexandra and Daniel, along with two stepchildren and two grandchildren.

The family has requested that donations in his memory be made to the Jack Reitman Hillel House c/o Federation CJA.

Reitmans operates 587 stores throughout Canada, including under the brand names Penningtons, RW & Co., Addition Elle and Thyme Maternity.

The company was founded in Montreal by his grandparents, Herman and Sarah Reitman, in 1926 and continues to be controlled by the family. Jeremy Reitman became chairman in 2010, after previously serving as its president. He is credited in business circles with seeing the company through the upheaval experienced in the retail industry over the past decade, particularly in the apparel sector, due to the rise of online shopping and stiff U.S. competition. ■

Jewish camp seeks to protect its island home

PAUL LUNGEN
plungen@thecjn.ca

For 65 years, B'nai Brith Camp (BB Camp) has offered an overnight summer camp experience, mostly for kids from Winnipeg, in a pristine wilderness setting on Town Island, which is located on Lake of the Woods, about five kilometres south of Kenora, Ont. Now, it looks likes BB Camp may have to share the island with others.

The City of Kenora, located in northwestern Ontario near the border with Manitoba, has issued a "Call of Expressions of Interest in the Acquisition of Town Island (RFP)." Kenora is looking to sell its share of the 80-hectare island and use the proceeds to acquire provincial land closer to the city, to use for development.

However, a group known as Friends of Town Island – which includes BB Camp, area cottagers, another overnight camp that uses the island's outdoor facilities and other stakeholders – is circulating an online petition calling on Kenora "to negotiate a deal to conserve Town Island."

The petition, which has garnered nearly 7,500 signatures, states that, "By seeking proposals for the development of Town Island on Lake of the Woods, politicians in Kenora are putting the interests of big business ahead of kids and the environment. For more than 100 years, Town Island has been the home-away-from-home for thousands of youth campers and countless area residents and cottagers who are inspired by its natural beauty."

Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) weighed in with an open letter sent to the city. Noting that much of the area surrounding Lake of the Woods is already developed, NCC said that it supports the "conservation of a portion of Town Island."

Aaron London, chair of Friends of Town Island and a former chair of the board of BB Camp, which owns 12 hectares of land on the island, said opponents of development want to see the island placed into a conservancy trust. "There are hundreds of cottagers in the area for whom Town Island is a natural touchstone," he said. In addition, fishermen stop on the island and YMCA-YWCA Camp Stephens, which is located on a nearby island, also uses Town Island for excursions.

Friends of Town Island met with Kenora's mayor in October and hopes to meet with representatives from the province. "We are

working hard to bring Kenora politicians to the negotiating table, in order to find a commercially viable conservation solution for the city, the Friends of Town Island and the public, who will all benefit from placing the land in trust," London said.

Whether they can alter the course set by Kenora remains to be seen. The city had been attempting to retain Town Island as a pristine, undeveloped property, but its attempts to swap it for provincial lands have so far failed. "We're not going back to the province. We've already made that determination," Kenora Mayor Dan Reynard told *The CJN*.

Reynard said that talks with the province went on for years, "but it just seemed to get bogged down in the system." In the meantime, "we've got this asset and a big infrastructure deficit within the community."

For his part, London said that, "We're not privy to why Kenora failed in its goal of conserving Town Island. As the only community-based conservation solution, we're not locked into a single solution, as was Kenora. With the support of Nature Conservancy of Canada, Ontario's recent policy and financial commitments to the environment and the support of our stakeholders, we are confident a public, private or hybrid conservation solution can be executed. There are no impediments, except Kenora's unwillingness to engage with us to let us help do now what they have wanted to do for a decade."

Reynard, however, said there's nothing in the city's request for proposal that requires the island be turned over to developers. The city is open to receiving bids from stakeholders who wish to retain the island in its undeveloped state. He said the best-case scenario for all concerned would be for the stakeholders to acquire the land. ■

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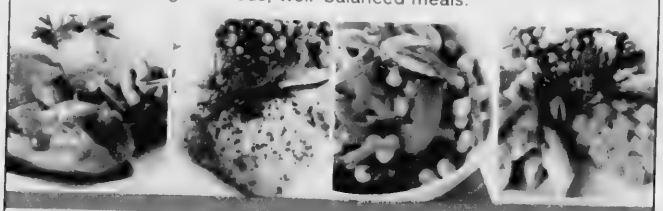

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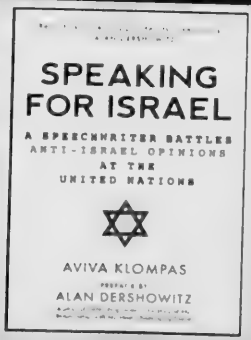

Aviva Klompas was a speechwriter and adviser for Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations, Ron Prosor. She was responsible for all speeches delivered by the State of Israel to the UN Security Council, General Assembly, and other UN venues. Aviva has a Masters of Public and Non-Profit Management and Policy from New York University and an Honors Bachelor of Science from the University of Toronto.

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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
JANUARY 9, 2020

School project gets Yad Vashem's attention

STEVE ARNOLD
SPECIAL TO THE CJN, WATERDOWN, ONT.

A high school student's history project has led to his great-grandparents being honoured by Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust memorial, for saving Jewish children during the Second World War.

Matthew Lang grew up never knowing about the heroism of his Dutch ancestors. When he uncovered the story while preparing a class assignment for his genocide history class at Waterdown District High School in Waterdown, Ont., however, it became his passion.

Now, because of that passion, Johannes and Catharina Van Roon have been named Righteous Among the Nations and will have their names added to the Wall of Honour at Yad Vashem. It's the same honour awarded heroes such as Oskar Schindler.

Lang's research also led to an emotional reunion between Lang's grandfather and Ralph and Marion Berets, the children who one day appeared in his home and then suddenly vanished.

"I'd never heard this story in my life," Lang said in an interview with *The CJN*. "At first, I just wanted to create a story for my class, but once we found Mr. Berets, it became something a lot bigger."

Tom Van Roon, Lang's maternal grandfather, was seven years old when his parents brought two new children into their home and warned him and his six siblings that they were never to speak of the guests.

"I was only seven at the time and at that age, you don't get a lot of say in things like this," he said. "We didn't know any better, but I did wonder why they never went to school or played outside and why they went and hid whenever someone came to the door."

Their hiding place was an attic space above the apartment's back bedroom. Initially, their parents visited often, but eventually, Dutch resistance leaders told them to stay away because their Jewish appearance endangered their benefactors.

"This could have been deadly for our parents because if you were caught hiding Jews, you were put on a train and never heard of again," Van Roon recalled.

The arrangement lasted three weeks, Van Roon said, before one of his sisters let the secret slip at school and the resistance decided to move them.

Like too many stories of the Holocaust, this one almost faded away. Van Roon said he told his children of the incident, but it didn't reach all of his grandchildren.

After hearing the tale, Lang focused his attention on learning the ultimate fate of those children, and found out that Ralph Berets was a retired English professor in Virginia and a regular volunteer at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

Tom Van Roon, left, Matthew Lang and his mother Karin with the letter from Yad Vashem confirming Van Roon's parents will be honoured as Righteous Among the Nations.

Johannes Van Roon

Catharina Van Roon

> "I'd never heard this story in my life. At first, I just wanted to create a story for my class, but once we found Mr. Berets, it became something a lot bigger."
>
> **Matthew Lang**

Setting up the initial contact fell to Van Roon.

"I telephoned and said, 'This is Tom Van Roon. I last spoke to you 72 years ago,' and there was eight seconds of dead silence before he simply said, 'I can't believe it.' "

That first phone call wasn't long, but Lang, his family, Van Roon and Berets eventually met at the Washington museum.

"I gave him a big hug and then the conversation just started," Van Roon said.

During that talk, Berets shared the rest of their story. Initially, he said, they hid in a forest cabin until they were betrayed by a neighbouring child. After hiding in a ditch and watching Nazi soldiers burn the cabin, they found the child who had betrayed them hanging from a hook in his family's barn.

Eventually, the Berets were hidden in a chicken coop with a dozen other people. The space was so crowded, the occupants had to take turns lying down. That's where they were hiding in May 1945, when Canadian soldiers liberated the Netherlands.

The Berets-Van Roon reunion was in 2017, the same year as the infamous neo-Nazi rally in Charlottesville, Va. It's also the year Lang began petitioning for his great-grandparents to be honoured by Yad Vashem.

"They were never recognized for what they did and I thought that was just crazy," Lang said. "Getting this was a very, very long process. This started out as just a class project, but I wouldn't have spent three years working on something that didn't mean a lot to me."

A medal and certificate marking the honour will be presented to the family in a ceremony at the Israeli Embassy in the Hague in April.

For Madeleine Levy, chair of the advisory board of Facing History in Ourselves Canada, which helped establish the genocide history course, Lang's pursuit of the honour for his great-grandparents is a testament to the never-ending quest for truth.

"This was a journey of the relentless pursuit of justice and shows we can all find the strength to do the right thing," she said. "It's a wonderful example of students doing great things in school."

The genocide and crimes against humanity course is offered to Grade 11 students at the Waterdown high school. It was created in 2014 by teacher Rob Flosman and includes having the students curate an annual museum in the school.

Manny Figueiredo, the director of education at the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, said Lang's success shows the "incredible power of education" to bring people together to understand history.

"I am humbled and inspired by the story of Matthew," he said. "Having been to Yad Vashem, I appreciate the gravity of this righteous deed. We are so fortunate to have educators leading work that explores the difficult learning around the Holocaust and genocide."

Lang is now a social sciences student at McMaster University.

Fran Sonshine, the national chair of the Canadian Society for Yad Vashem, said families like the Van Roons represent the best values of humanity.

"Righteous Among the Nations were ordinary men and women who demonstrated extraordinary courage during the Holocaust. These individuals from various backgrounds across Europe had a common characteristic: conviction in the responsibility to help, guided by moral choices. These are the values the Canadian Society for Yad Vashem aims to convey to the next generation of Canadians through its Holocaust education programs." ■

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Meanwhile, if you have travel medical coverage through your work benefits, don't assume you're fully covered. Check your existing coverage carefully to ensure you meet any stability period requirements, or if you require customized coverage for pre-existing conditions.

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Truth: Your most expensive vacation ever could be the one where you got sick while away and relied on travel insurance with inadequate coverage.

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Guest Voice

NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh talks with Jewish community

Rabbis Edward Elkin, Baruch Frydman-Kohl and **Chaim Strauchler**

We recently joined other Jewish leaders from across Canada for a roundtable discussion with Jagmeet Singh, the leader of the federal New Democratic Party (NDP). Organized by the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA), the gathering followed a campaign during which the party made ambiguous, and sometimes troubling, comments about Israel and the boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) campaign.

Is it worthwhile for our community to engage the NDP when it was ambivalent about BDS during the last election? To answer this question, a diverse range of representatives from the Jewish community across the country – religious and secular, progressive and conservative, young and old, queer and straight, Jewish service agencies, JCCs, and the Jewish federations – engaged Singh in a wide-ranging conversation about domestic and foreign policy issues important to our community.

Our meeting took place one week after the Dec. 10, 2019 killings in the kosher market in Jersey City, N.J. There was no ambiguity from Singh about the rise of anti-Semitism and the need to combat it. He supports a national strategy to combat online hate, is willing to consider a rebate for security costs incurred by Jewish and other targeted minorities and agrees that providing additional resources to police for dedicated hate-crime units is one way to combat anti-Semitism.

He went further, stating that the NDP supports the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism as an educational tool to help policy makers address the ever-evolving scourge of Jew-hatred.

In our meeting, Singh demonstrated a clear understanding that while criticism of Israel or its government similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as anti-Semitic, an obsession with, and a single focus on, Israel and Israelis, as well as denying the right of the Jewish people to self-determination are indicators of anti-Semitism.

He unequivocally condemned BDS, stating that it "creates tensions and divisions," and "does not advance peace." Singh stated that neither he nor the NDP support BDS, believing that it is not "the right path forward."

Singh spoke positively of his 2016 fact-finding mission to Israel, about the Jewish state's nation-building experiment, its contribution to technological innovation, the revival of Hebrew as a language, and the diverse and complex range of political positions among Israelis. He condemned Iran and supported sanctions against the regime, while still seeking cautious ways, along side tough sanctions, to engage that country in order to change its behaviour.

We have watched, with deep concern, the creep of anti-Semitism into progressive politics in the U.S., Britain, and Canada, in particular, on university campuses. We were pleased to see Singh take a position that distinguishes him from other progressive leaders like the U.K.'s Jeremy Corbyn. He committed to fight any kind of racism and discrimination and stated clearly that progressive Zionists had "a home" in the NDP.

We see in Singh a willingness to confront anti-Semitism within the progressive movement of Canada. For him to do so, we need to have an open line of honest communication. Our goals as a community must be to forge as broad a base of support for Jewish Canadians, our domestic concerns, and Israel as possible and not to allow those issues to become political wedges. The battle for the hearts of progressive Canadians is not lost. This model of advocacy avoids the provocation and confrontation that attract clicks on social media. We believe it is wiser to engage our political leaders as allies.

Our community's strategy must not be to label our interlocutors as opponents, but instead to persuade them of the justice of our cause. Whichever party individual members of the Jewish community may support, having these types of conversations is one of the important ways our community contributes to ensuring Canada remains a country of care and civility. ■

Rabbi Ed Elkin is the spiritual leader at the First Narayever Congregation in Toronto. Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl is Rabbi Emeritus of Toronto's Beth Tzedec Congregation. Rabbi Chaim Strauchler is the rabbi at Shaarei Shomayim Congregation in Toronto.

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INTERNATIONAL

Analysis

Assassination of Soleimani 'a step up' in U.S.-Iran conflict

Judah Ari Gross
JERUSALEM

The United States' killing of Iranian commander Qassem Soleimani, one of the most important figures in the Islamic Republic, marks a major escalation in the ongoing standoff between Washington and Tehran, which the Islamic Republic will not likely suffer quietly.

As the head of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' (IRGC) expeditionary Quds Force, Soleimani was directly responsible for much of Tehran's activities throughout the region over the past two decades, establishing and building up Iranian proxies throughout the Middle East and allowing the Islamic Republic to project its power far beyond its borders, in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Afghanistan and elsewhere.

"This is a step up in the conflict between the United States and Iran. This is certainly significant," Orna Mizrahi, former Israeli deputy national security adviser for foreign policy, told the *Times of Israel*.

The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) has accused Soleimani of personally directing attacks against the Jewish state from Syria, including a failed drone strike last year, and he is considered one of the major supporters of Hezbollah, helping the Lebanese terror group turn from a relatively minor player in the Middle East to one of the key political and military organizations in Lebanon, with weapons arsenals rivaling those of sovereign nations. Soleimani claimed to have personally assisted Hezbollah develop its tactical strategies for fighting Israel during the 2006 Second Lebanon War.

While another commander will take Soleimani's position as head of the Quds Force, his death strikes a serious blow to Iran and significantly raises the potential for conflict in the region, as Tehran and its allies may seek to avenge him. Indeed Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, following the Jan. 3 airstrike on Soleimani's convoy, quickly threatened "vigorous revenge… for the criminals" behind the attack.

Soleimani was "one of few truly irreplaceable" figures in Iran, who masterminded many of the country's military endeavours abroad and who was seen as a potential future leader of the Islamic Republic, according to former Israeli deputy national security adviser Chuck Freilich.

Palestinians walk next to posters of Qassem Soleimani , the day after he was killed in a U.S. drone strike on Jan. 3. HASSAN JEDI/FLASH90 PHOTO

"His death will not fundamentally affect Iranian expansionism, but Iran will have lost a grand strategist and possible future national leader," Freilich said.

Over the past year and a half, tensions between U.S. and Iran have been rising, following U.S. President Donald Trump's withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPA), and the resumption of heavy U.S. sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

Tehran retaliated to these measures with violations of the accord and, since this summer, with direct violence against the U.S. military and American allies – in addition to its ever-present support for Shiite militias throughout the Middle East.

However, save for its so-called maximum pressure campaign of financial sanctions, the U.S. has largely refrained from retaliating against Iranian aggression in the region, drawing occasional criticism from Israeli officials, who ordinarily abstain from publicly disagreeing with the country's most important ally.

According to Mizrahi, the strike on Soleimani – which also killed the deputy commander of a powerful Iran-backed Iraqi militia, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis – demonstrated that the United States is still capable and willing to act militarily against Iran.

Soleimani, a key enemy not only to the U.S. and Israel but also Sunni nations throughout the Middle East, had been threatened with assassination by a variety of state actors over the years. Last year, Iran claimed to have thwarted an "Israeli-Arab" attempt on Soleimani's life, arresting three people connected to the plot. The Quds Force commander also claimed to have survived an Israeli airstrike during the 2006 Second Lebanon War.

Soleimani's survival over the years can be attributed to both a reluctance by his enemies to bear the burden of killing such an important Iranian figure as well as his own caution in his movements and activities as he traveled through the region, meeting with key allies.

Indeed the Quds Force commander reportedly used multiple decoys in leaving the Baghdad airport last Thursday night, having just arrived from Beirut. However, this safeguard was apparently for naught, as the U.S. military was able to specifically strike the vehicles in which he and al-Muhandis were traveling, demonstrating an impressive level of intelligence.

"Now the Americans have shown that they know how to respond when they want to respond," Mizrahi said. "This is a major achievement for the United States."

According to Mizrahi, who served in a variety of senior intelligence positions in the IDF and Prime Minister's Office, the United States would likely want this strike to serve as something of a knock-out punch, rather than an opening gambit into a wider war. Under both Trump and former president Barack Obama, the U.S. has been working to disengage from the Middle East, not get involved deeper into regional conflicts.

At this early stage, it is not clear how Iran's retaliation will be carried out Due in large part to Soleimani's own efforts over the past 20 years, Tehran has many options at its disposal for reprisals through its proxies in the Middle East – Shiite militias in Iraq and Syria, Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen. Tehran or its proxies may seek their vengeance by striking U.S. allies like Saudi Arabia and Israel.

Speaking to Iranian state media, IRGC spokesman Ramezan Sharif explicitly threatened Israel with retaliation. "The fleeting happiness of the Americans and the Zionists will in no time turn into mourning," he said.

Though Iran has typically refrained from launching large-scale strikes directly from its territory for fear of direct retaliations, preferring instead to conduct attacks from the countries in which its proxies operate — such a strike is not outside the realm of possibility. In addition to any physical reprisals, Tehran could bring to bear its extensive offensive cyber capabilities against the U.S. and its allies.

Iran, which announced it will no longer agree to the JCPOA, may also decide to further step up its uranium enrichment as a response to Soleimani's assassination.

However, nothing is inevitable or certain. Though Soleimani was undoubtedly a key figure in the region and the U.S. killing him presents serious potential for a wider and deadlier conflict, recent Middle East history contains several cases of hugely important officials being killed without earth-shattering retaliations.

In 2004, Israel killed Hamas founder Ahmed Yassin in an airstrike in Gaza. The following period saw a decrease in Palestinian terrorism and an eventual end to the Second Intifadah.

While Israel and Iran's other enemies in the region must prepare for potential Iranian retaliation, it is not yet clear what the full ramifications of Soleimani's death will be in both the short and longterm.

"At this stage, we should be using more question marks than exclamation points," said Mizrahi. ■

Times of Israel / Timesofisrael.com

Opinion

The keys to understanding American anti-Semitism

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks
JTA LONDON

Chairman of the Jewish Agency, Isaac Herzog, at a rally in Jerusalem in solidarity with Jews in the U.S. and across the world following a wave of anti-Semitic attacks, and in parallel to the rally held in New York, on Jan. 5 (see next page). HADAS PARUSH/FLASH90 PHOTO

The last two festivals to be added to the Jewish calendar prior to modern times – Purim and Hanukkah – are both about anti-Semitism. There is one obvious difference between them. Haman, of the Purim story, wanted to kill Jews. Antiochus, of the Hanukkah story, wanted to kill Judaism. It was the difference between Nazi Germany and Soviet communism.

But there is another difference that has renewed salience after the horrifying knife attack in Monsey, N.Y., on Dec. 28. What saved Jews on Purim was behind the-scenes influence: Esther's influence in the royal court. But the danger of anti-Semitism remained. What if hatred returned and this time there was no Esther around to save the Jews? That is one reason, according to the Talmud, why we do not say *Hallel* on Purim.

On Hanukkah, by contrast, Jews fought back and won. The Maccabees became a symbol of Jewish activism, of refusing to live in fear. As a symbol of this, the original custom was to light Hanukkah lights outside the front door of the house, or at least in a window facing the street, to publicize the miracle. Today, we see the lighting of giant menorahs in the most prominent public face of cities throughout the world.

Hanukkah tells us not to curse the darkness, but instead to bring light to the world. It tells us to fight back and not to be afraid.

The shocking events in Monsey, together with those in Jersey City, N.J., Poway, Calif., Pittsburgh and elsewhere, are proof that the darkness has returned. It has returned likewise to virtually every country in Europe. That this should have happened within living memory of the Holocaust, after the most systematic attempt ever made by a civilization to find a cure for the virus of the world's longest hate – more than half a century of Holocaust education and anti-racist legislation – is almost unbelievable. It is particularly traumatic that this has happened in the United States, the country where Jews felt more at home than anywhere else in the Diaspora. Why is it happening now?

First, because of everything associated with the Internet, smartphones, viral videos and above all, social media. These have what is called a "disinhibition effect." People are far more hateful when communicating electronically than when speaking face-to-face.

Cyberspace has proved to be the most effective incubator of resentment, rancour and conspiracy theories ever invented. Anti-Semitism thrives on conspiracy theories, versions of the Blood Libel and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, updated for the 21st century.

Second, because of the way people encounter these phenomena: often alone, in the privacy of their own home. This allows them to be radicalized without anyone realizing it is happening. Time and again, we read of people carrying out horrific attacks, while those who knew them recall not having seen any warning signs that they were intent on committing evil attacks.

The most dangerous phenomenon of our time is the "lone wolf" attack, because it is so hard to predict. The Internet is particularly dangerous for loners, people in whom the normal process of socialization – learning to live with others who are not like us – has broken down.

Historically though, the most important factor in the rise of anti-Semitism is the sense among a group that the world as it is now is not the way it used to be, or ought to be.

The far left has not recovered from the global collapse of communism and socialism as ideologies. Hence the assault on Jews as capitalists and libertarians.

The far right feels threatened by the changing composition of Western societies, because of immigration on an unprecedented scale and low birth rates among the native populations. Hence white supremacists.

Many radical Islamists are troubled by dysfunctions in the Muslim world. Hence the emergence of anti-Zionism as the new anti-Semitism.

These concerns do not, in and of themselves, lead to anti-Semitism. One other factor must be added.

When bad things happen, good people ask, "What did I do wrong?" They put their house in order. But bad people ask, "Who did this to me?" They cast themselves as victims and search for scapegoats to blame.

The scapegoat of choice has long been the Jews. They were the archetypal outsiders. For a thousand years, they were the most prominent non-Christian minority in Europe. Today, the state of Israel is the most significant non-Muslim presence in the Middle East. It is easy to blame Jews because they are conspicuous, because they are a minority and because they are there.

Anti-Semitism has little to do with Jews – they are its object, not its cause – and everything to do with dysfunction in the communities that harbour it.

Anti-Semitism, or any hate, becomes dangerous in any society when three things happen: when it moves from the fringes of politics to a mainstream party and its leadership; when the party sees that its popularity with the general public is not harmed thereby; and when those who stand up and protest are vilified and abused for doing so.

All three factors exist in Britain now. The same must not be allowed to happen in America.

What, then, must we do? The first priority must be to strengthen security in Jewish venues, to intensify police patrols and to develop habits of vigilance. The British Jewish community has a fine example in its Community Security Trust, which, with the support of government grants, monitors risks, enlists thousands of volunteers to stand security duty and works closely with the government and local police forces. "Lone wolves" tend to seek soft targets, and the Jewish community must ensure as far as possible that there are no soft targets.

Next, we must recognize that while we have enemies, we also have friends – and they are many and strong. In Britain, as we faced a leader of the Opposition who many of us felt has made his party a safe haven for anti-Zionists and anti-Semites, it was enormously important that non-Jews from all walks of life came out in our support. It made us feel we were not alone.

Many surveys in the United States have shown that Jews are the most admired of all minorities. We cannot fight anti-Semitism alone. The victim cannot cure the crime. We need to make friends who will stand with us and help lead the fight. This is best done by explaining how anti-Semitism endangers everyone, because the hate that begins with Jews never ends with Jews.

Lastly, we must never forget the message of Hanukkah: fight back. Never be afraid. Whatever the threats, be proud to be Jewish and share this pride with others.

At times our history has been written in tears, yet we have outlived every empire and every civilization that sought to destroy us. Our spirit, symbolized by the Hanukkah candles, is indomitable. Where others spread darkness, let us bring light. ■

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks is a global faith leader who served as chief rabbi of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth from 1991 until 2013.

In blow to PM, 65 MKs back swift deliberations

RAOUL WOOTLIFF
JERUSALEM

Israeli President Reuven Rivlin said on Jan 6. that he had been surprised by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent request that the Knesset grant him immunity from prosecution in three corruption cases.

Speaking at a conference in Jerusalem organized by the *Yedioth Ahronoth* daily and the *Ynet* news website, Rivlin said that after the September elections, when he formulated an outline for a potential unity government – which didn't materialize – that would see a power-sharing arrangement between Netanyahu's Likud party and centrist rivals Blue and White, he had understood Netanyahu would not seek immunity.

The president's plan, which both Netanyahu and Gantz had said they accepted but evidently interpreted differently, entailed the premier taking a leave of absence if indicted.

Meanwhile, the Blue and White party said on Jan. 5 that it had the support of more than enough lawmakers to convene a committee to discuss Netanyahu's request for immunity, as the Knesset's legal adviser also gave a green light for the move.

The announcements marked a possible setback for Netanyahu, moving the Knesset one step closer to quickly deliberating and rejecting his request to be shielded from prosecution in three criminal cases that could spell the end of his political career.

Blue and White said it was presenting Knesset Speaker Yuli Edelstein with letters from faction heads representing 65 MKs calling for the immediate establishment of a committee to weigh immunity for the prime minister.

Blue and White MK Avi Nissenkorn, who heads the Knesset arrangements committee, met with Edelstein on Jan. 5 to discuss the demand to form the Knesset house committee in order to deal with the immunity request.

According to the Knesset legal adviser, Netanyahu's request must be weighed by the house committee before it can be voted upon by the whole plenum. Due to the lack of a functioning legislature amid a year-long ongoing political deadlock, and with new elections set for March 2, there is currently no functioning house committee to consider the request.

In a legal opinion released on Jan. 5, Knesset adviser Eyal Yinon said there was no legal obstacle stopping the lawmakers from setting up a house committee to decide on immunity for Netanyahu, assuming there was majority support for such a move. He also said that the Knesset could not be compelled to set up a committee, despite the charges against the premier and his request for immunity, possibly giving Edelstein room to refuse to allow the process to go forward.

In a statement, Edelstein confirmed he met with Nissenkorn and Yinon. The senior Likud lawmaker said he requested another legal opinion from Yinon outlining his powers on the convening of the Knesset arrangements committee.

Netanyahu requested immunity last week, but is reportedly banking on lawmakers being unable to swiftly set up a committee and discuss his request, thus pushing off the process until after the March elections. As Knesset Speaker, Edelstein must approve any meeting of Nissenkorn's arrangements committee, which deals with procedural parliamentary issues such as the makeup of other committees and is needed to create the house committee.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the Orient Hotel in Jerusalem, on Jan. 1.
YONATAN SINDEL, FLASH90 PHOTO

Since Netanyahu currently doesn't have a majority of 61 lawmakers to support his immunity request, his Likud party wants the decision on the matter to be delayed until the next Knesset, hoping such a majority could then be found within a more amenable set of lawmakers.

Last week, Blue and White fumed that Edelstein was delaying proceedings to shield Netanyahu, after the speaker refused to consider the request.

Edelstein had said he was abroad until the weekend, and wanted to meet with Yinon before reviewing such a request. He agreed to meet Nissenkorn after Yinon.

Avigdor Liberman, whose right-wing Yisrael Beytenu party currently holds the balance of power should an immunity vote be held, has aligned with Blue and White on the matter and vowed to block the protection for the premier.

Yisrael Beytenu's MK Eli Avidar joined the pressure campaign on Edelstein in an interview with Army Radio.

"If Edelstein plays into Netanyahu's politicking, he will enter the history books as the Knesset Speaker who acted against the most fundamental principles of democracy. We were the first to say that Netanyahu is simply seeking an immunity government. What will the next step be? Will he ask to run the country from Namibia, because it doesn't have an extradition agreement? This is unbelievable."

Labor-Gesher also called for the revival of the non-functional house committee together with the Joint List and Democratic Camp, whose leaders have expressed support in the past for ousting Netanyahu, they appear to have the majority of lawmakers in the parliament to vote to revive the house committee – and then shoot down Netanyahu's bid.

Netanyahu is charged with fraud and breach of trust in three cases, as well as bribery in one of them. He denies wrongdoing and has accused police and state prosecutors of an "attempted coup" against him.

Under a 2005 change to the Knesset immunity law, members of the legislature no longer receive automatic immunity from prosecution but must request it from the plenum when relevant.

Netanyahu's request, made last week, essentially sets up the upcoming March 2 election as a referendum on him and his legal troubles. The Likud leader's allies have presented the police probes and judicial proceedings as an undemocratic attempt to remove him from power and have begun campaigning on the idea of voting Likud as a way of protecting the prime minister from prosecution. ■

Times of Israel staff contributed to this report. Timesofisrael.com

25,000 march against anti-Semitism in New York

BEN SALES
JTA, NEW YORK

An estimated 25,000 people marched across the Brooklyn Bridge and held a rally on Jan. 5 to protest rising anti-Semitism in and around New York City.

The rally comes following a spate of attacks on Jews – including, most recently, a stabbing attack at a rabbi's home in the New York City suburb of Monsey and a shooting in a Jersey City kosher supermarket that claimed four lives. There has also been an unending stream of verbal and physical assaults on Jews in neighbourhoods of Brooklyn with large Orthodox populations.

The rally drew throngs of Jews from the state, which is home to nearly two million Jews and delegations came in from cities across the country like Washington, D.C., and Cleveland. And the march included the state's most senior politicians, including Gov. Andrew Cuomo and senators Kirsten Gillibrand and Chuck Schumer.

"What has happened in Brooklyn, what has happened in Monsey, N.Y., was an attack on every New Yorker and every New Yorker has felt the pain," Cuomo said ahead of the march. "Racism and anti-Semitism is anti-American and we have to remember that. It is ignorant of our history because to know the history of the Jewish community is to love and appreciate the Jewish community because New York would not be New York without the Jewish community."

Despite the sombre reason for the march, the atmosphere was relaxed and even uplifting. Scores of Jews traversed the bridge, singing and stopping to take selfies amid the occasional chant of "no hate, no fear" – the rally's slogan.

But marchers interviewed along the route all said they felt a certain measure of fear, as well as the need to display their defiance in the face of the uptick in Jew-hatred. Rabbi Rachel Ain of Manhattan's Sutton Place Synagogue, which was graffitied with a swastika in 2017, said that she is "in a combination of denial, shock and sadness."

"We had hoped anti-Semitism was a moment of the past and what we're seeing now is that it's rearing its ugly head and we can't ignore it," Ain said. "I am aware there's increased hate and I'm conscious of it, but I still walk with my kippah, I still go to shul, I still send my kids where they should be sent for their Jewish learning and I won't back down."

Along with signs bearing the official slogan, people brought homemade signs condemning their chosen ideological targets. One said, "America 2020 not Germany 1933." Some condemned President Donald Trump for fomenting racism. Another took aim at congresswomen Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib, who support the movement to boycott Israel and have been accused of anti-Semitism. ■

Jewish Life

TRAVEL | FOOD | MUSIC

Pictured from left, a street market in Hoi An, lanterns light up a market stall in Hoi An, and a woman and child from the north.

A Shabbat-friendly tour of Vietnam

KEN GRUBER
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Aside from good health, what are the three most important things in your life? For me, this is a relatively easy question to answer: family, Judaism and travel.

Whereas family and religious beliefs are the anchors that keep me grounded, travel is just the opposite – it's an opportunity to spread my wings, discover other cultures and live a little on the edge. Yet I've just returned from a magical trip that allowed me to combine all three of my life pillars.

As much as I love to travel, Vietnam was never really on my bucket list. As an expat American, I couldn't imagine visiting the country that had been involved in shattering the lives of so many people in such an inhumane and pointless fashion. As a Jew, I wasn't all that interested in touring a country that has virtually no Jewish history whatsoever. Not to mention the fact that it takes over 24 hours to get there, complete with lengthy layovers and totally inedible kosher airline meals.

And then my son decided to move there.

Having backpacked throughout Asia when he was a university student, he fell in love with Vietnam and was determined to return. He has now been living in Saigon (apparently, it's OK to call it that, in addition to Ho Chi Minh City) for over a year, where he teaches English. He gets paid Western wages in a country where 50 cents buys a beer, and a beautiful apartment can be rented in the city centre for less than $300 a month. Add to that a country that is beautiful, friendly, has incredible food and everybody rides motor scooters – what 25 year old wouldn't want to live there?

As I started to think about the trip – which would require more planning than usual to accommodate my observance of Shabbat and my kosher dietary requirements, while still allowing me to see everything I wanted – a thought came to mind: since I was going to all this trouble anyway, why not bring along some like-minded travellers?

Long story short, I teamed up with a travel agent friend of mine to develop a Shabbat-friendly tour of Vietnam, with the intention of marketing it to the masses. But with the clock ticking, and no advertising budget, only three participants committed to join me: my siblings. Yes, totally unexpectedly, my two older brothers and younger sister decided – independently – that it not only sounded like an amazing trip, but an incredible way for us to reconnect.

Not that we needed a bonding experience, mind you, but with a 14-year age gap, the four of us had never been alone together on a trip. And with no parents, children or significant others travelling with us, it was destined to be a journey that would either strengthen or destroy the bond we have always been so proud of.

Vietnam is an incredible place, and though Jews are few and far between, comparisons with Israel kept on popping into my head. Both countries are relatively small and are surrounded by not the friendliest of neighbours. Both have been war-torn and have come through with flying colours. For their size, both have amazingly diverse topography – within a 24-hour period, I went from needing a parka in the northern highlands, to wearing shorts in the south. One can experience mountain ranges, seas, forests and farmlands all in a single day.

Religious towns (in Vietnam's case, full of Buddhist temples) exist alongside vibrant, secular cities (except for the oceanfront in Tel Aviv and the massage parlours in Saigon, the two are not that different). And both have a lively food culture.

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Though I'm preferential to shawarma, falafel and schnitzel, Vietnamese cuisine is some of the best in the world. And thankfully for my tour group, vegetarian food could not be easier to come by, thanks to the Buddhist population. And we did manage to eat two kosher meat meals, thanks to Chabad.

Vietnam is home to three Chabad houses. My first Shabbat was spent in Hoi An, an ancient coastal town that readers of *Travel and Leisure* magazine recently named "The Best City in the World." That might be a bit of an overstatement, but there is no denying that this UNESCO World Heritage Site is magical. And, like all gorgeous coastal towns in Asia, it is overrun by young Israeli backpackers who are fresh out of the army.

So it was no surprise that the Chabad House there was packed with Israelis looking for a taste of home. They were not looking for Friday night services, mind you (my brothers and I completed the minyan), but camaraderie and food – and delicious food at that. We were treated to a traditional Shabbat meal full of salads, fish, chicken soup and roast chicken, with all the sides. We also enjoyed single-malt Scotch, which was poured all night long by the visiting Israeli rabbi who was spending his last Shabbat among his new friends before returning home.

Outside the Chabad Saigon. KEN GRUBER

> *We did manage to eat two kosher meat meals, thanks to Chabad.*

My second Chabad Shabbat was spent in its Vietnamese headquarters in Saigon (the third site, which I did not get to visit, is in Hanoi; all three are serviced out of Saigon, ensuring they have rabbinic supervision and kosher food supplies). It is quite the operation, and it's so busy that two rabbis and their families are stationed there full-time.

Rabbis Menachem and Avrami Hartman (yes, they are related) have been there for 15 and three years, respectively. In addition to overseeing all Chabad operations in the country, they operate a school (mainly for their own kids, of which there are many), a kosher restaurant and a bakery (the challahs and babka we had were second to none).

Our Friday night dinner in Saigon was also packed, but the crowd was different than in Hoi An. The dinner in Saigon was filled with an older demographic, most of whom were Americans who are stationed there for work. In typical "small Jewish world" fashion, I was seated next to a Toronto couple from my old neighbourhood. It was a wonderful, warm, comforting (and delicious) evening, an oasis in the chaotic madness of the city.

On my last day in Vietnam, I visited the Cu Chi Tunnels, an immense network used by Viet Cong soldiers during the war. It was a harsh reminders of the brutality of war and the destruction it leaves in its wake. Yet the Cu Chi Tunnels, and the War Remnants Museum in Saigon, are also symbols of reconciliation and forgiveness. The Vietnamese have moved on with their lives in a remarkably dignified and optimistic manner that is a wonder to observe.

So it is that I boarded my plane back to Toronto that evening with a renewed sense of well-being. For three intense weeks, my life's anchors – family, Judaism and need for exploration – had been put to the test and not only survived, but thrived. ■

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Canadian musician practises music therapy in Israel

RUTH SCHWEITZER
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Caleb Elias is a Canadian guitarist who's currently doing an internship in music therapy at Bar-Ilan University in Tel Aviv, where he works with music students who have developmental disabilities.

After finishing Acadia University's music therapy program last year, Elias needed to complete 1,000 hours as an intern before becoming an accredited music therapist.

His internship with Musequality, a music education program for people with disabilities, began last September. Musequality is a joint project of Bar-Ilan and Akim Israel, which provides services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Students enrolled in Musequality, which was founded by music therapist Ruthy Reinich two years ago, play piano or guitar and sing in a choir. "We work with adults who range between 20 years old and 50 years old. Most of them have severe autism or Down syndrome," Elias said.

The goal of Musequality is to give the students the skills they need to assimilate into the working world, he added.

Playing a musical instrument is a workout for the brain. Playing music affects us cognitively because we use our brain to sort out the spatial relationships between notes, Elias said.

"When you play an instrument, you're using your entire brain to remember the song and tell your body how to play it," he said. "So this can be very powerful for people who are able-bodied or disabled. But specifically with these people, we are working to improve their sense of self-esteem and self-worth and give them something they can do, because a lot of times in society, people with these kinds of disabilities are told what they can't do."

Tal Naor, left, is a participant in Musequality, an Israeli music education program for people with disabilities. Beside him, from left, are program founder Ruthy Reinich, accordionist Yoav Gross and intern Caleb Elias, and in front on keyboards is Roee Ginant

Elias said the students he works with are musically inclined, or at least passionate about music, and many of them are highly intelligent and creative. One student, Roee Ginat, who's blind and autistic, is a fantastic piano player, Elias said. "He hears something once and knows it and can play it."

Elias said he decided to become a music therapist because it's one of the best ways he can use music to make a difference. And, as a profession, it has more job security than the average musician has.

In "Pressure," a song on Elias' YouTube channel, he raps about financial insecurity. "Making a living as a creative person is hard these days, even though it's easier than ever to get your music out there," Elias said.

On and off for five years, he played clubs in Malaysia and the United Arab Emirates. "It was a good life, but it gets tiring and sometimes doesn't lead to other work," he said. "And I was finding it's all the same rate of pay and it's really hard to get above that and stay there, even when you do get some gigs going."

Elias, 31, who's descended from two guitarists – his father and grandfather – is a graduate of the music program at Humber College in Toronto, where he specialized in contemporary guitar performance.

A singer and songwriter, he described his style as funky R&B with hip-hop beats and a lot of guitar. His musical influences range from James Brown, the Beatles and Eric Clapton, to Drake.

He's also produced Arenye, a singer who blends Afrobeat and hip-hop, and singer-songwriter Avery Dakin. "I'm really pleased with the stuff I did with both of them," Elias said.

His internship ends in July, when he will head back to Toronto. "Right now, I'm focused on getting certified as a music therapist, but I'm practicing a lot, playing guitar and singing and getting my chops together for when I get back to Toronto," he said. ■

Easy Israeli cuisine

BARBARA SILVERSTEIN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Israeli-style food has become an incredibly popular cuisine in many major cities worldwide.

The problem is that many Israeli recipes have too many ingredients for the average home cook with a life that does not revolve around the kitchen. However, Adeena Sussman's new cookbook, *Sababa: Fresh Sunny Ingredients from My Israeli Kitchen*, really makes Israeli-style foods accessible for North American cooks.

Sussman is an American who lives in Israel. She moved there for love, but she also has a deep appreciation for the country.

The recipes in *Sababa* are kosher.

Sussman offers her own take on classic Israeli dishes like shakshouka, baba ghanoush and kubaneh bread. She also takes familiar dishes like granola, lemon curd and ice pops and incorporates Israeli ingredients. For instance, she uses tahini paste and silan (date syrup) in her granola.

Sussman provides recipes for creating Israeli spice blends like baharat, hawaiij and za'atar. She also suggests substitutions. For instance, Greek yogurt can be substituted for labaneh, an Israeli-style yogurt.

The cookbook, with its gorgeous photographs, is also beautiful. Sussman uses a lot of colour in her cooking. Her crisp apple and pomegranate slaw, for example, is green, orange, red and purple, and it tastes as good as it looks.

I also tried Sussman's pistachio-crusted lemon bars. I brought the dish to a pot-luck dinner and it was real a hit. I went home with an empty pan and many requests for the recipe. ■

Pistachio-Crusted Lemon Bars

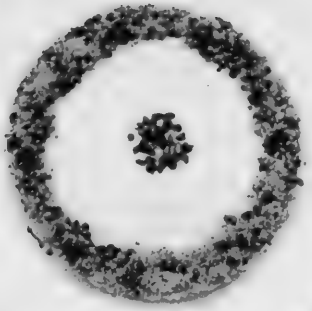
Pistachio crust

- 90 ml (6 tbsp) cold coconut oil and more for greasing the pan
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) shelled pistachio nuts
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) all-purpose flour
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) icing sugar
- 5 ml (1 tsp) lemon zest
- 1.25 ml (1/4 tsp) fine sea salt

Lemon curd

- 3 large eggs
- 4 large egg yolks
- 185 ml (3/4 cup) sugar
- 45 ml (3 tbsp) corn starch
- 1.25 ml (1/4 tsp) fine sea salt
- 250 ml (1 cup) freshly squeezed lemon juice (about 5 lemons)
- 60 ml (4 tbsp) lemon zest
- 80 ml (1/3 cup plus 1 tsp) extra virgin olive oil
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) chopped toasted pistachios
- 5 ml (1 tsp) crushed rose petals for garnish (optional)

To make the crust, grease a 20-cm (8-inch) square pan with coconut oil. Line the pan with two crisscrossing strips of parchment paper, greasing between each layer and leaving a 5-cm (2-inch) overhang on each side. Grease the top and sides of the parchment-lined pan.



Place the coconut oil in a small bowl and refrigerate until solid, about a half an hour.

Place the pistachio nuts in the bowl of a food processor fitted with a steel blade and pulse the nuts until they are almost fine, about 30 seconds. Add the flour, sugar, zest and salt until incorporated, about 15 pulses. Using a spoon, add the coconut oil in small chunks to the food processor and pulse until the mixture looks like uniform large breadcrumbs, about 15-20 pulses.

Pour the mixture into the prepared pan, pressing down to form a crust, but not over-packing. Chill for 30 minutes.

To make the lemon curd, place a fine-mesh strainer over a bowl and set aside. In a small saucepan, whisk together the eggs, egg yolks, sugar, cornstarch and salt and then whisk in the lemon juice and zest until smooth. Place the saucepan over medium heat and cook, whisking constantly, until the mixture becomes thick and the curd coats the back of a spoon, about 8-9 minutes.

Remove the saucepan from the heat and use a silicone spatula to push the curd through the mesh strainer into the bowl below. Discard the solids in the strainer. Whisk in the olive oil until smooth. Cool slightly, then press plastic wrap onto the surface to prevent the formation of a skin.

Preheat the oven to 165 C (325 F). Bake the chilled crust until it has puffed, then sunk and turned golden, about 20-22 minutes. Remove the crust from the oven and cool for about 3 minutes.

Raise the temperature of the oven to 180 C (350 F). Pour the filling over the crust, smoothing it evenly with a knife or offset spatula. Bake until the curd has formed but the centre still moves a bit, about 16–17 minutes.

Remove the pan from the oven, cool completely and seal the top with plastic wrap. Refrigerate for at least 4 hours. Cut into 16 pieces and garnish with crushed chopped pistachios and crushed rose petals.

Crisp Apple and Pomegranate Slaw

- 1 medium apple, cored and thinly sliced
- 80 ml (1/3 cup plus 1 tsp) apple cider vinegar
- 1 l (4 cups) shredded green cabbage
- 1 l (4 cups) shredded red cabbage
- 1 small red onion, thinly sliced
- 1 large carrot, shredded
- 2 scallions, very thinly sliced
- 2 medium radishes, very thinly sliced
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) extra-virgin olive oil
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) whole-grain Dijon mustard
- 25 ml (1½ tbsp) honey
- 8 ml (1½ tsp) ground cumin
- 5 ml (1 tsp) kosher salt
- 1.25 ml (1/4 tsp) freshly ground black pepper
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) pomegranate seeds
- 60 ml (1/4 cup) chopped fresh cilantro
- 60 ml (1/4 cup) chopped fresh mint
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) lightly toasted shelled pumpkin seeds (pepitas)

Toss the apples with 5 ml (1 tsp) of vinegar in a large bowl, then add the green and red cabbage, onions, carrots and scallions and toss.

Combine the olive oil, remaining vinegar, honey, mustard, cumin, salt and pepper in a jar with a tight-fitting lid and shake until creamy.

Pour the dressing over the salad, toss to coat and let the slaw sit for at least 15 minutes (30 minutes will really mellow the acidity of the vinegar), then toss again with the pomegranate seeds, cilantro, mint and pumpkin seeds before serving. Makes 8-10 servings.

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Novel explores healing through crisis

NORMAN RAVVIN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

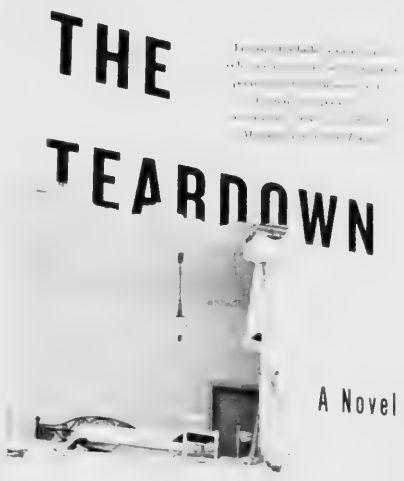
Stories of parents abandoned by their child pack a brutal punch.

Alice Munro's collection of short stories, *Runaway*, includes a portrait of an aging mother who is haunted by the mysterious disappearance of her daughter. In Philip Roth's 1997 masterpiece *American Pastoral*, a father's life is undercut by his daughter's commitment to a radical group reminiscent of the Weather Underground and then to an extreme form of Jain asceticism. The father-daughter relationship at the heart of David Homel's novel *The Teardown* follows some of these patterns, though the narrative heads for a different conclusion.

Its main character is Phil Brenner, a journalist who's in the midst of a mid-life crisis while his industry is crumbling around him. At odds with himself, he hangs around the house, travels to his therapy appointments and muses over what he might do to escape what he calls his "slump."

Brenner's family lives on the outskirts of Chicago, though that geography is depicted generically, so the nearby city and its home country are hardly named. The locale's past comes into focus when Brenner recalls his boyhood: "When the Burlington local stopped at the station in the meagre shopping district in his neighbourhood as evening fell, it would bring the early edition of the *Sun-Times*. Even before the train ground to a halt with that metal-on-metal sound he loved, the conductors would be throwing off bales of newspapers."

The area's contemporary character is coloured with an unsettling American ennui: "Out here among the fields, with the strip malls and hotels with giant conference rooms and mammoth grocery chains, everything outsized, dwarfing the customer, personnel was required to stock the shelves and change the sheets on the beds and mop up the spilled drinks after hours. The people who did these essential tasks came from Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala."



The Teardown
by David Homel
Véhicule Press

> *The theme of shifting identities in America haunts the Teardown*

At home, each member of the Brenner family exists in their own solitude: Brenner's wife, Amy, is the breadwinner at a nearby hospital; the two daughters devise their own ways to live apart from their parents, while in the family house.

It's the older daughter, Dana, who ends up central to her father's efforts to end his personal and professional slump. After a long estrangement, they travel together to Belgrade, where a rare assignment sends Brenner back to territory he first explored and wrote about during the Balkan wars of the 1990s.

The second half of *The Teardown* offers a portrait of the refugee crisis that has moved through east and central Europe in recent years. The Serbs that Brenner and his daughter encounter are wary of strangers from further east who appear in search of a new home.

Belgrade is a stopping place, with borders blocked by razor wire and security teams in nearby Hungary, so temporary communities pop up in the city's parks: "the women were industriously washing clothes while the men stared at their mobile phones, something people did all over the world. The few children who were part of the voyage slept. No one harassed them, not even drunk teenagers at night."

Phil and Dana Brenner work to help these people, alongside "local NGOs, doctors and refugee specialists who were part of the region's enormous expertise that had accumulated over recent decades." Each new encounter raises the question of what a true solution might be to the age-old human disaster of displaced populations.

Brenner aligns his ancestral past with the refugee disaster, but only in a few glancing, discomfiting passages: "he had family members slaughtered in the killing fields, but unfortunately those fields were in Europe and they didn't count anymore. He was lumped together with the oppressors. He had become white, something he never was when he was younger."

This theme of shifting identities in America, of the processes by which ethnic groups make their way through, and out of, danger, haunts *The Teardown*. Dana Brenner studies and records such history reflexively, almost without knowing what draws her to it.

In his earlier works, Homel wrote about the pursuit of a cure for the damage done by personal and historical disasters. Therapy and its discontents are an important part of this book, as well.

The Teardown is divided between two landscapes and their particular challenges brought about by political and private collapse. At its end, the novel returns to the Illinois cornfields and to the possibility that a small society – a family of four – will recover. ■

Norman Ravvin is a writer and teacher in Montreal. His most recent novel is The Girl Who Stole Everything.

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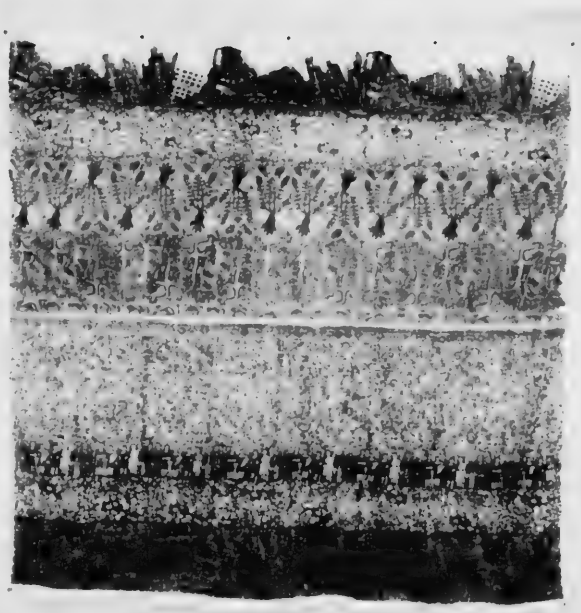
Artwork's narrative began with picture of Auschwitz



MATT RENDER
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

I am standing before *Unnatural Disasters Cont'd*, a large fabric work on the wall of Rochelle Rubinstein's studio. I am immediately captivated and awestruck by its complexity. It contains multiple different sections, and as I am about to find out, each one pertains to a separate layer of rich tapestry within the life of the artist. The middle parts are alive with vibrant colour and an almost psychedelic quality, while the top and bottom contain bleak, dead-looking imagery.

"I started at the bottom, and kept moving up, row by row, from there," Rubinstein explains.

The dark and heavy bottom, a repetitively block-printed row of sharp lines, is based on an aerial photograph of Auschwitz, taken by a British reconnaissance pilot in 1944, the year Rubinstein's mother spent in Auschwitz. This is where the loose narrative of *Unnatural Disasters* begins.

Rubinstein is a Toronto-based, print maker, painter, fabric and book artist who has exhibited widely. She has also facilitated many workshops and projects with health workers, abused women, people with eating disorders, seniors with depression, at risk youths, and Arab and Jewish artists, using techniques that are intrinsic to her own practice: drawing, carving, printing, painting, sewing, and collage.

The concerns that she shares with these communities are evident in her studio work.

This densely layered work involves an exploration of oppression, repression, environmental and social crisis, personal and institutional power, beauty, desire, death.

If you look around her studio, it becomes apparent rather quickly that stripes are used predominantly throughout her work.

"I often begin a new work by block-printing stripes," she explains.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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Miles Nadal jcc
NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF MEMBERS
NOTICE is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of Members will be held at *50 Spadina Avenue in the Al Green Theatre on the 3rd day of February 2020 at 7:00 o'clock in the evening to:
Members of the Corporation may be nominated by written petition signed by not less than twenty-five (25) persons, who are members and eligible to vote at the Annual Meeting. The petitions must be accompanied by the written consent of the nominee and must be received by the Chairman of the Governance & Nominating Committee at least fifteen (15) days prior to the Annual Meeting, after which time no further nominations shall be accepted.
Proxy forms for those unable to attend the meeting may be obtained from the Business Office of the Corporation during business hours.
DATED the 19th day of December, 2019
BY ORDER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Zach Roher Secretary

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Folksinger gains traction with new album

RUTH SCHWEITZER
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Songs that turn out to be popular with listeners are not always recognized as hits by their creators and sometimes they get overlooked at recording sessions.

That almost happened with "Down by the Water," a song about springtime and renewal by indie folksinger Abigail Lapell. She wasn't going to include the song on her 2019 album, *Getaway*, but when she was in the studio, a friend persuaded her to record it.

"It turned out very well," Lapell said about the song that's been streamed more than four million times on Spotify.

Lapell is a powerful singer who writes well-crafted, poetic songs. *Getaway*, Lapell's third release of original material, has been nominated for a 2020 Canadian Folk Music Award in the contemporary album category. She's also on the 2020 nomination list for English songwriter of the year.

One of themes of *Getaway* is travelling, something Lapell, who's based in Toronto, has been doing a lot of since her previous album, *Hide Nor Hair*, won the award for contemporary album of the year at the 2017 Canadian Folk Music Awards. Since then, she's hit the road, touring Canada, playing major festivals, such as the Mariposa Folk Festival in Orillia, Ont., and performing in the United States.

Lapell has likened some of her songs to little postcards from places she's visited. A story she heard when she was on tour in Saskatchewan, about a UFO sighting, is the basis for her bluesy "UFO Song," which is on her new album. The song is written from the point of view of someone who's paralyzed and terrified while watching what he believes to be a UFO in the night sky.

Abigail Lapell

She writes impressionist lyrics, some of them intimate and personal. In the haunting song, "Shape of a Mountain," a "frozen peak asleep in the snow" is a metaphor for her heart. "I won't write 'that person broke my heart.' It will probably be in there, but I don't write in a straightforward, narrative way," she said.

Lapell has described herself as a folk-noir singer, specializing in dark folk songs. In that vein, "Gonna Be Leaving" looks at the troubled side of a relationship and hints at a pending breakup. She described it as, "A feeling of wanting to leave and planning to leave and not quite getting around to it."

"Little Noise," a lively, celebratory tune, is Lapell's response to the #MeToo movement. In it, she sings, "You can run, run and hide, you can't get away."

At her performances, Lapell accompanies herself on guitar. Self-taught, she's an acclaimed fingerstyle guitarist. "I do tend to fingerpick because it has kind of a rhythmic style. My way of playing is pretty idiosyncratic and really flexible. It's a very versatile way to get a lot of different sounds going," she said.

Lapell's musical background includes time she spent as part of Montreal's indie-folk scene in the early 2000s. She came of age as a singer-songwriter during the DIY era of recording. Much of her 2011 independent debut, *Great Survivor*, was recorded in a bedroom by Heather Kirby, who was then the bassist in the indie-pop band Ohbijou.

Getaway is an extension of Lapell's previous release. Both albums were recorded at Union Sound in Toronto, with producer Chris Stringer, for the boutique indie music label Coax Records, and with many of the same players. "Those albums are similar in that there is a lot of variety," Lapell said. "There will be a very stripped down guitar vocal and the next song will be a kind of a folk-rock thing. It's a kind of a mix of genres. They both feel pretty eclectic." ■

The album is available at abigaillapell bandcamp.com/album/getaway. Lapell will perform in Toronto at the Speak Music Be Kind Festival, which runs from Jan. 17-19 (speakmusicbekindfest.com), and the Winterfolk Blues and Roots Festival, which runs from Feb. 21-23 (winterfolk.com).

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

The stripes usually become obscured by layers of imagery, carving, and de-contextualizing, but they remain foundational and essential to the finished work.

"It took a while before I realized that the stripes may be connected to the uniforms in Auschwitz. That image has been seared into my brain."

Above the abstracted Auschwitz border that anchors the bottom of *Unnatural Disasters Cont'd* is a repeating line of black and white block-printed figures.

"That's my family," Rubinstein explains, "in a refugee camp in Italy after the war. Light and 'air' have entered this section of the work, and I become aware of a subtle increase of breathing space, new rhythms, and sensual colour, as my eyes move upwards."

The middle of *Unnatural Disasters Cont'd* contains colourful, wavy Hebrew letters. "That is the *Orphan's Kaddish* (prayer for a dead parent), on repeat," Rubinstein tells me.

This representation of *Kaddish*, both mournful and beautiful, leads the eye towards images of hand-built stone walls and wells of Ireland, pottery designs from ancient Ecuador, and Tibetan healing plants and roots (some of them upside-down).

At the very top is a rather startling image: the falling twin towers of 9/11.

She hopes that viewers will not feel limited by knowledge of her background. "Some people look at the striped grids in my work and see the Holocaust, but others see bamboo fields, or rays of light."

One piece that she showed me emphasized this beautifully. It included this Hebrew text, in large, block letters: "*Bruchim Habaim*".

I asked Rubinstein what that means. "All who come," she said, "are welcome." ■

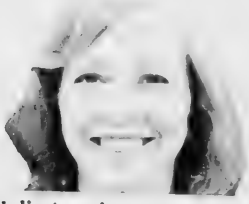
Rochelle Rubinstein's website is www.rochellerubinstein.com

מזל טוב!
Mazel Tov!
Mazel tov to Samuel and Renata Galperin on celebrating their 66th wedding anniversary
Two lucky people happily walking through life together has been a very gracious thing
Mazel tov to Vera and Leslie Vertes, who will celebrate their 68th anniversary on Jan. 12, with love from their family and friends.
Feel like kvelling? Submit your digital photos with a description of up to 25 words to www.CJNews.com/mazeltov. For any questions, email jgreen@thecjn.ca

Parashah

Vayechi | Genesis 47:28–50:26

Rabbi Julia Appel analyzes the tragic life of Jacob, and a dangerous turn for the Jewish people
Eli Yissar fishes for an explanation to a famously confusing blessing found in this week's reading
Rabbi Yoseph Y. Zaltzman says we all have our unique roles to play, but we can still learn from others



Rabbi Julia Appel

Eli Yissar

Rabbi Yoseph Y. Zaltzman

I was talking with my brother-in-law last weekend while we watched our kids play. We had just heard the news about the attack on a Hanukkah party in Monsey, N.Y. What can be done? Is this new or very old anti-Semitism? How do we keep our children safe?

This week's Torah portion, Vayechi, includes the end of Jacob's life, in which he gives blessings to his sons. But in a few short verses at the beginning of Exodus next week, we flip from a family story of relative safety to a dangerous time for the Jews of Egypt. It's a dramatic turn: Joseph practically commands Egypt and then, upon his death, the Jews of Egypt are swiftly suspected and enslaved.

The past year has felt swift and disorienting to me. I'm searching for inspiration to ground me. This week, I'm looking to Jacob's blessing to his grandsons Ephraim and Menashe. Jacob says this: "May the angel who redeemed me from all harm bless the youths" (Genesis 48:16).

Jacob's life was, to be honest, tragic. He had a terrible relationship with his brother Esau. His marital life was rough, as he was tricked into marrying a woman he didn't love (Leah) and then lost the wife he did love (Rachel) in childbirth. For 20 years of his later adult life, he mourned the death of his favourite son, Joseph, whom he thought was killed by a wild beast. Upon learning his son was alive, he also learned that Joseph's own brothers sold him into slavery. Yet, Jacob summarizes his life as being redeemed and protected from all harm.

A witness to the Monsey attack spoke of a "Hanukkah miracle" that most guests had already left the party. And the next morning, the community dedicated a new Torah, dancing in a street processional. Because that is what we can do.

May we be redeemed from all harm. ■

Rabbi Julia Appel is the senior Jewish educator and campus rabbi at the University of Toronto Hillel.

One of the most famous verses in this week's parashah is Jacob's blessing of his grandchildren Ephraim and Menashe, in which he prays that they should be fruitful, and multiply "like fish in the midst of the land."

That is a somewhat confusing blessing. How can fish multiply on land? It is a known fact that fish produce offspring quickly, but they do so within their natural habitat – the water, not on land. So why would Jacob bless his grandsons in such a way?

It could be that Jacob simply meant to say that Ephraim and Menashe should multiply on land as much as fish do so in water. But Israeli lecturer Sivan Rahav-Meir gives a deeper meaning to this blessing, suggesting that just like a fish's natural habitat is the water, the Children of Israel's natural habitat is the Eretz Yisra'el (Land of Israel), and by this point, Jacob already knew they would endure a long journey in exile and would be like "fish in the midst of the land." Jacob knew that his descendants would struggle to stay connected to our Torah and culture, because they would not be in their natural habitat. Just like fish would struggle to stay alive outside of water, so would the Children of Israel struggle to meet their spiritual needs outside of the Holy Land.

As Jews who live outside of Israel, this blessing touches every single one of us because we are fish on land. By keeping the Torah and all of its mitzvot, we are behaving differently from everyone else. We live in a physical world and yet try to maintain a connection to our living source, our water: Eretz Yisra'el. Jacob therefore blesses his grandchildren – and through them, all of us – to succeed in keeping our spiritual lifestyle alive outside of Israel. ■

Eli Yissar is a Grade 11 student at Ulpanat Orot, part of Bnei Akiva Schools of Toronto.

When Jacob blessed his children, the Torah states, "He blessed them, each one according to his blessing, he blessed them." By using the word "them" after talking about individually blessing each son, the Torah is implying that each tribe did not only receive its unique blessing, but also benefited from the blessings of the other tribes. How did this manifest itself?

On a superficial level, since the tribes form one nation, it stands to reason that any blessing received by one tribe would benefit the others. On a deeper level, since there is an inherent unity between the Israelite tribes, any qualities inherited by one are ultimately absorbed by the others.

Furthermore, since all the blessings were given directly from Jacob, their father, it stands to reason that even though he bestowed specific blessings for each tribe, he intended that all his children would benefit from all the blessings. The specific focus highlights the special power each tribe needed in order to overcome the challenges it faced and fulfil its destiny.

We each have our unique roles, yet we can still learn from and benefit from one another's qualities, just as Jacob's blessings to each tribe were transferred to the others. On a superficial level, when we are united and working toward the same goal, the benefits and achievements of each individual or group are extended to the nation as a whole. On a deeper level, the strengths and accomplishments of each individual or group influence the mindset and motivate the actions of others. Furthermore, when an individual is focused on the underlying oneness within his or her area of focus, it makes the person open to others who may be pursuing that same vision, even if it is expressed in a different way or approached from a different angle. This enables us to relate to and participate in one another's endeavours more deeply, which further reveals the underlying oneness that is the source of all blessing. ■

Rabbi Yoseph Y. Zaltzman is the founder and senior rabbi of the Jewish Russian Community Centre of Ontario.

Social Scene

Jerusalem Foundation

TORONTO

Over 60 people attended The Jerusalem Foundation of Canada's parlour meeting in support of The Esther Lynne Learning Together Fund. Founded in Esther's memory by her son, Josh Burnett, the fund aims to promote mutual understanding between Jewish and Arab children through innovative joint learning initiatives. It focuses on the educational potential of collaboration between schools as a grassroots effort towards conflict resolution. The project has proven benefits not only in conflict transformation, but also in its educational and economic outcomes. ■

Josh and Lauren Burnett

Shari and Daniel Cooper

Stacey Cynamon, Monette Siegal, Marissa Kassam

Robin Kadanoff, national executive director, Jerusalem Foundation of Canada; Shai Doron, president, Jerusalem Foundation; and Esther Burnett

Nomi Teshuva, chief development officer, Jerusalem Foundation; Shai Doron; Jonny Goldman

Mary Radcliffe, Alistair Leyland and Barbara Frum

Shari Silverstein, Ronnie Silverstein and Lowell Shrieder

Lewis Mitz, president, Jerusalem Foundation of Canada; Josh Burnett and Kevin Green

Rabbi Elie Karfunkel, Marc Drabinsky and Brandon Siegal

Alan Siegal

STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER PHOTOS

For details on how to have an event featured in this page, e-mail: thesocialite@thecjn.ca

What's New

JAN. 9 - 16

by Josh Green

Thursday, Jan. 9

TRENDS IN JEWISH LIFE
Randall Schnoor discusses "The Changing Jewish Family in Toronto." Ottawa Congregation for Humanistic Judaism, 7:30 p.m. Rotoplex Cultural Centre, 2325 Cedarcell Ave. $15 for non-members. RSVP: 416-365-3940 or info@ottawahj.org.

BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP
Circle of Care begins an eight-week support group for those who have lost a spouse. Beth David, 1:30-3 p.m. Register **Charlotte**, 416-635-2860 ext. 271.

Sunday, Jan. 12

YIDDISH CLASSES
Yiddish classes for all levels start, 10 a.m., Beth David synagogue. $160 for 10 sessions. Register: yiddish@ujafed.org, or 416-635-2883 ext. 5189.

WOMEN'S LEARNING
Rabbi Seth Grauer discusses "From Canaan to Egypt: Sibling Rivalry 2.0," and **Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner** discusses "Moshe the Superhero: What's Your Secret Identity?" 10-11:20 a.m., Kehillat Shaarei Torah, 2640 Bayview Ave. Free. Details: info@torontotorah.com, or 647-234-7299.

BAT MITZVAH CLUB
Esther Gitlin teaches about the meaning of becoming a bat mitzvah. Chabad of Markham, 1 p.m. Register: chabadmarkham.org/batmitzvah.

Monday, Jan. 13

MANGINOT MELODIES CONCERT
Colin Schachat and Sons, the Toronto Philharmonic Orchestra and the Toronto Jewish Male Choir perform. Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts, doors open at 7 p.m. Tickets: chabadmarkham.org/concert.

Deadline:
The deadline for the Jan. 23 paper is Jan 13. All deadlines are at noon.
Phone: 416-391-1836 ext. 269;
email: **whatsnewcjn@gmail.com**.

Sisterhood steps up for Shoah survivors

Members of the Adas Israel Sisterhood in Hamilton, Ont., pose with material they collected and purchased for donation to a group of 16 Hamilton area Holocaust survivors in need. The baskets, which were assembled on Dec. 15, contained toothbrushes, toothpaste, other hygiene products, candles, crossword puzzle books and tea, among other gifts.

WINTER FILM AFTERNOONS
The documentary, *Fiddler: A Miracle of Miracles*, is shown at Beth Tzedec, 1 p.m., $5 donation for Out of the Cold program requested. RSVP: 416-781-3511.

JEWISH HUMANISTS OF OAKVILLE
Jewish Secular Humanists of Oakville meets to discuss a variety of topics. For location, email **Elka**, ere@bell.net.

MAHLOKET MATTERS
Examine contemporary issues with reference to biblical conflict narratives to understand and engage in constructive disagreement on opposing political views. Led by **Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl**. Beth Tzedec, 7:30 p.m., $20 for three classes. Info and registration: 416-781-3511.

Tuesday, Jan. 14

MORNING STUDY GROUPS
Michael Rubin discusses "Me Too," as part of MiDor l'Dor: Challenging Issues in Jewish Life, Then and Now, 10:30 a.m., Beth David.

ISRAEL STAMP CLUB
The club meets to discuss "Designs of Ornan, Menussy, Reisinger," 7 p.m. For location, call 416-226-2050.

TUESDAY STUDY GROUP
Adam Nayman discusses movies at a Women of Adath study group breakfast at 9:30 a.m. Non-members, $10 per session. Info: **Marjorie**, 416-780-9156.

Thursday, Jan. 16

JUDAISM'S GIFTS TO THE WORLD
Six-week course to learn the Jewish secrets to feeling good, however you feel, with **Rabbi Moishe Schurder**. Chabad of Markham, 8 p.m. Register: chabadmarkham.org/gifts.

THE ANTI-SEMITISM TOOLBOX
Michael Mostyn, **Lawrence Hart**, **Daniel Koren** and **Lauren Isaacs** give talks about anti-Semitism.
Chabad Romano, 10500 Bathurst St., 7-9:30 p.m., free.
Register: JewsAgainstAntiSemitismCanada@gmail.com.

Et Cetera

CANCER SUPPORT
Cancer support for Jewish women, including social programs, educational events and resources can be found at L'Chaim. Info: 416-630-0203, or lchaim@ncjwctoronto.org.

SCHOLARSHIPS
Beth Tzedec Men's Club offers scholarships to students pursuing programs of higher Jewish education. Applicants do not need to be a member of Beth Tzedec. Details: 416-781-3511, or hershr@rogers.com.

CAREGIVING STUDY
Baycrest is looking at the experiences of men 80 and older who are caring for a wife with dementia. Participation involves two to three interviews, in person or on the phone. Contact **Ifah**, 416-946-3724, or iarbel@research.baycrest.org.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

BRAIN AGING PROJECT
Baycrest is looking for adults aged 60-85 who are noticing changes to their memory and/or thinking skills, for a study. Must be available for three testing sessions at Baycrest and 10 weekly training sessions at local community centres. Call **Yael**, 416-785-2500 ext. 3377.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED
- Short-term volunteers are needed to deliver meals to the elderly. Minimum commitment of three weeks. Contact Circle of Care, 416-635-2900 ext. 375
- Baycrest is looking for volunteers, contact 416-785-2500 ext. 2572, or volunteer@baycrest.org
- Beit Halochem, Aid to Disabled Veterans of Israel is seeking hosts to welcome veterans into their homes this spring. Details: 905-695-0611, or beithalochem.ca.

For Seniors

- **Association of Jewish Seniors.** Jan. 16, **Yifat Bear Miller** of the Jewish National Fund will discuss the latest news from Israel. Shaarei Shomayim, breakfast at 9:30 a.m., $5 for non-members. Register: **Rozlin**, 647-340-7961.
- **Bernard Betel Centre**, 416-225-2112. Computer, tablet and cellphone classes for all levels and interests start the week of Jan. 13. Register: **Diane**, 416-225-2112 ext. 128, or dianneer@betelcentre.org; course on "the life and times of Julius Caesar" runs Thursdays from Jan. 9 to March 5, 1-3 p.m., $76.50/$153; course on "the great women of science" runs Tuesdays, Jan. 14 to March 3, 12:30-2:30 p.m., $68/$136. Register: **Sharon**, ext. 124.
- **Holy Blossom Temple.** Seniors fitness specialist **Judy Chu** is the guest, Jan. 13. Program includes exercise and lunch, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., $3/$5.

Prosserman JCC

Donald Gales Family Pavilion on the Sherman Campus, 4588 Bathurst St., 416-638-1881 ext. 4020; prossermanjcc.com.

- Experience World Cultures Through Classical Music starts Jan. 24, 11 a.m.; Connecting With Technology starts Jan. 27, 11 a.m.; **Shlomo Schwartzberg** discusses "Movies From Outside North America," four weeks, starting Jan. 15, 1-4 p.m.
- Shalom Singers Choir, a non-auditioned choir that performs in the community, meets Mondays at 2 p.m.; supervised mah-jong meets Wednesdays at 1 p.m.; drop-in duplicate bridge, Thursdays at 12:30 p.m.
- Ongoing programs include Israeli folk dancing, choir, Yiddish conversation and more.

Miles Nadal JCC

750 Spadina Ave., 416-924-6211, mnjcc.org.

- Strength of Self, alternating Mondays, 11 a.m. A program for women who have experienced abuse. Call ext. 147.
- The New Hollywood of the '60s and '70s with film critic **Adam Nayman**, Mondays starting Jan. 13, 1:30 p.m. Register: ext. 155.
- **Seniors Arts and Culture**, ext. 155, lisar@mnjcc.org. Community dance workshops led by **Karen Kaeja** of Kaeja d'Dance, meet Wednesdays starting Jan. 15, 1 p.m. Create simple dances, no dance experience needed. Register: 416-516-6030. Comedian **Hart Pomerantz** discusses "The Hart and Lorne Terrific Hour," Jan. 16, 1 p.m. **Cantor Sidney Ezer** and **Asher Farber** celebrate Shabbat in song, Jan. 24, 12:30 p.m. Free (includes kosher lunch). Advance registration required at ext. 0.
- **Seniors Fitness**, ext. 521. Start Here, a free community wellness integration program designed to provide peer support, community engagement and learning and recovery opportunities. Agency referral required. Call ext. 574.
- Michael Bernstein Chapel holds services Thursdays at 7:15 a.m. and Sundays at 8 a.m. Info: **Coleman**, 416-968-0200.

Schwartz/Reisman Centre

Joseph and Wolf Lebovic JCC, 9600 Bathurst St., 905-303-1821. Contact **Andrea** for info: andrea@srcentre.ca, or ext. 3006.

- Programs for people with Parkinson's boxing classes, contact yorkregion@rsbaffilate.com; cycling program, Thursdays at 1:30 p.m., contact stephen@srcentre.ca; mindfulness, contact melissa@theyogapath.ca
- Drop-in duplicate bridge, Tuesdays at 6:45 p.m.
- J-Choir, a non-auditioned choir starts Jan. 20 at 7:30 p.m.; J-House Band starts Jan. 21, 7:30 p.m.; Experience World Cultures Through Classical Music starts Jan. 21, 11 a.m.; Connecting With Technology starts Jan. 22, 10:30 a.m.
- Recreational programs for children, teens and young adults with autism spectrum disorder, contact karina@srcentre.ca, or ext. 3042. ■

SeeJN | Winter fun

People enjoy the snow at Mount Hermon ski resort in northern Israel, on Dec. 28, 2019. BASEL AWIDAT/FLASH90 PHOTO

THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
CJN

The CJN is hiring!

The Canadian Jewish News is looking to hire a full-time copy editor immediately to work out of our offices in Vaughan, Ont. The position involves editing news, features and opinion copy for both the weekly newspaper and the CJNews.com website.

- ☑ The ideal candidate will have at least two or three years related experience and/or have graduated from a post-secondary journalism program.
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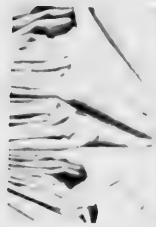

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24

Za'atar Roasted Chicken Over Sumac Potatoes

- 4-5 medium red potatoes (0.5 kg or 1½ lb), scrubbed
- 4 medium shallots, quartered
- 60 ml (4 tbsp) extra-virgin olive oil
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) sumac
- kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 small roasting chicken (about 1.5 kg or 3½-4 lb), patted dry
- 1 small lemon
- 75 ml (5 tbsp) za'atar
- 1.25 ml (1/4 tsp) dried red pepper flakes
- 2 cloves garlic
- 6 sprigs thyme

Preheat the oven to 220 C (425 F). Cut each potato into 6 wedges.

In a 23x33-cm (9x13-inch) metal or glass baking dish, toss the potatoes and shallots with 15 ml (1 tbsp) of olive oil, along with the sumac, salt and black pepper.

Season the cavity and exterior of the chicken well with salt and pepper. Zest the lemon into a small bowl, halve the lemon and set aside.

Add the remaining 45 ml (3 tbsp) olive oil to the bowl along with 60 ml (4 tbsp) of za'atar and red pepper flakes and gently stir.

Stuff the lemon halves, garlic and thyme sprigs inside the chicken, then rub the chicken all over with the za'atar mixture. (If you want to, you can tie the legs of the chicken together; it's easier than doing a full chicken trussing, which is not necessary.) Sprinkle with the remaining za'atar.

Place the chicken, breast-side up, on top of the potatoes. Roast the chicken for 15 minutes, then reduce the heat to 165 C (350 F) and continue to roast until a chicken leg jiggles when pulled, the juices run clear and the potatoes underneath the chicken are soft and the ones on the edges are crisp and golden, about another hour and 20 minutes (the rule is 23-25 minutes per pound of chicken, but the high roasting temperature at the beginning of the recipe shaves off a little time).

Remove the chicken from the oven and let it rest for 10 minutes. Remove the lemon, garlic and thyme springs from the cavity, discarding the garlic and thyme. Carve the chicken right on top of the potatoes, letting the juice coat the potatoes, then squeeze one or both halves of the reserved lemon on the chicken and potatoes. Makes 4-6 servings.

Yoel Finkelman: Preserving Israeli and Jewish heritage

JENNIFER TZIVIA MACLEOD
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

The National Library of Israel (NLI), formerly the Jewish National and University Library, is a venerable institution that is home to the world's largest collection of Judaica. Yoel Finkelman has been the curator of its Chaim and Chana Salomon Judaica Collection since 2014, and is helping oversee the library's renewal process.

How did you come to be the NLI's Judaica curator?

The idea was to bring in people who were not necessarily professional information scientists, but who had a background in the content; people who saw things from the perspective of researchers and readers, to be content experts responsible both for collection expansion and for being content advisors across the library staff.

I'd spent most of my professional career teaching Torah in women's *batei midrash* in Jerusalem, or in an academic context. Personally and professionally, it was time for a change. So I jumped at the opportunity to be involved in something this exciting and unique – and a little bit out of the box.

What does a curator do?

People are used to the term "curator" in museums. They expect curators to be the people who create exhibits. But only a small percentage of the collection in a museum is visible.

Part of the goal of the renewal process is to make these vast, unique collections more accessible to the public. We have the largest, deepest, most diverse collection of Jewish books, manuscripts, archives, periodicals, music and photographs that's ever been collected.

We have two volumes of Maimonides' commentary on the Mishnah in Judeo-Arabic. The only copy of *Hatikwah* in Naftali Herz Imber's own handwriting. We have seventh-century magical bowls, biblical manuscripts, underground Soviet dissident literature, the first Jewish periodicals.

How do you keep all those materials organized and accessible?

That's one of the biggest challenges. We have an extremely knowledgeable, talented, diverse staff. Nevertheless, if we come across a potential donation or purchase, it can be difficult to put it into context if it comes from a place that's not particularly well-documented, to find out how unique and important this is.

We're trying to be nimble and diverse, and as up-to-date and knowledgeable as we can, calling on academics and people outside our institution who can help guide us to what matters in such diverse areas.

Have you had any interesting acquisitions lately?

We had a really marvellous donation, a suitcase full of North African Hebrew and Aramaic magical amulets, probably late 19th, early 20th century. It made its way from North Africa to the Soviet Union, where it was given to someone for safekeeping. A Jewish doctor from the U.S. was on tour in the 1950s to see the Soviet medical system, and in a visit to a synagogue, the rabbi gave him this suitcase and said, "You have to take care of it; it can't stay here."

That suitcase stayed in his family until very recently, when the family donated it to us. It's a marvellous story of the transnational migration of this set of texts outside the typical canon of what educated Jews might be aware of – this long tradition of magic and amulets. This is the kind of thing that gets us excited.

This past year, we also acquired a set of drawings by Franz Kafka. That's a very complicated saga, but broadly speaking, Kafka's friend Max Brod ignored Kafka's wishes to have all of his material burnt and came to Palestine in 1939.

Yoel Finkelman

When Brod passed away in 1963, he instructed the executors of his own will to donate his archive, including the Kafka materials, to a public institution in Israel. He mentioned the library. It took a lot of doing and a lot of lawyers and lot of bickering back and forth. Eventually, the courts realized that the material belongs here.

The NLI seems to have more global aspirations than most national libraries. Is that true?

That's something unique about the National Library of Israel. Other national libraries focus on documenting the geographic borders of a nation-state. Israel and the Jewish people are in a somewhat unique situation because of the relationship between the State of Israel and the Jewish Diaspora.

On the one hand, the Jewish people is larger than the geographic borders of the State of Israel, and also, the nation-state of Israel includes significant cultural and religious minorities.

So we try to do both – to be the national library of the State of Israel, with its majority Jewish culture and many cultural and religious minorities, and also to be the library of the Jewish people, because of the uniqueness of the State of Israel and the Zionist project.

Is the NLI accessible to Israel's Muslim community?

The simple answer is yes – the collections are open to anybody and everybody. But part of the process of renewal has been a deliberate attempt to reach out to, and be accessible to, to focus on educational and cultural activities for Israel's Arab minority.

There's a section on the website in Arabic and recently added tools to allow reference services in Arabic. And not a week goes by that there isn't a group of schoolchildren from east Jerusalem on a field trip to the library.

Part of the decision to change the name from Jewish National and University Library to National Library of Israel was to be more inclusive in that sense. Israel is both a Jewish state and also a state that has minorities who need to be served and documented.

What's in store for the new NLI building?

Key to the renewal plan was the decision by the State of Israel to give the National Library what is, in some ways, the most desirable piece of real estate in the country, between the Knesset and the Israel Museum.

In addition to bringing us out of the closed campus of the Hebrew University, the building will include a permanent exhibit, rotating exhibits, lecture halls and concert halls. By early 2022, the permanent exhibit should become a must-see stop for any visit to Jerusalem. ■

This interview has been edited and condensed for style and clarity.

Sonny Goldstein, CFP
President

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How Vichy France became an 'Eden' for Jews

HARVEY STARKMAN

For desperate European Jews fleeing the Nazis in the mid-1940s, one of the safest places of refuge turned out to be the southeast region of France, which was administered by fascist Italy. In fact, a Vichy prefect from Lyon sarcastically called it "that promised land, which the left bank of the Rhone has become" for Jewish refugees.

How did territory occupied by a country that, in 1938, explicitly denied Jews inclusion in the "pure Italian race" become a safe haven for those very people? The reasons are complicated.

Anti-Semitism in Italy, unlike in its Axis ally Germany, or in collaborationist France, had very shallow roots. The Italian Jewish community emerged in the days of the Roman Empire. At the outbreak of war, it was numerically small – about 47,000 Jews out of a total population of 45.6 million. It was also not an immigrant population. Italian Jews were broadly assimilated into the culture and well integrated into Italian life. Jews held high positions in the military and professional ranks, and initially even in Mussolini's National Fascist party.

> *Passport stamps, detention and the surrendering of Jews for transfer curtailed*

There were also different perceptions of, and responses to, the "Jewish problem," on the part of the German, French and Italian authorities. The German obsession with the Jews, especially after 1942, was all-consuming. The post-1940 Vichy government of France, under its banner of "national revolution," initially targeted foreign-born Jewish immigrants, and later French-born citizens, for deportation and "resettlement" in the east.

The Italian policy called for "the economic expulsion and social isolation" of the Jews from Italian society. Italians viewed their treatment of the Jews as being "more humane." Whatever the rationalization, Jews in Italy felt the effects of this policy beginning in 1938.

But astonishingly, in the French lands that Italy occupied and administered from 1940 until it surrendered to Allied forces in July 1943, Jewish refugees lived relatively freely.

The Italian Fourth Army, which occupied the territory and effectively served as its administrative arm, continually signalled to the administrators of the collaborationist Vichy state that it would determine policy, and that the policy in the Italian Zone would not be the same as in Vichy France. Hence, passport stamping, detention and the surrendering of Jews for transfer were curtailed and Jews were protected.

Civil administrators, mostly at the consular level in the Foreign Ministry, also played a role. A number of individuals have been recognized by Yad Vashem and other institutions for their actions. Even Mussolini's self-appointed inspector of racial police frustrated both his French and German contacts through his delaying tactics.

Was this an assertion of local power, or a political strategy in anticipation of an Allied victory following Germany's North African defeat in November 1942? The question can be debated, but the consequences are clear: thousands of Jewish lives were saved.

However, things did not end well. It is a broadly applicable maxim that if something cannot go on forever, it will stop. Ironically, the end of the period of safety and sanctuary in the Italian Zone came as a result of the long hoped-for American entry into the war.

Germany's defeat in North Africa proved a turning point. Allied forces landed in Sicily in early July 1943. By the end of the month, Mussolini had been deposed, the fascist government had fallen, Italian troops withdrew from France and negotiations with the Allies had begun.

The Germans, however, were determined not to leave the "soft underbelly of Europe" exposed to the invading Allied forces. German troops flooded into the political and military vacuum and the Einsatzgruppen ruthlessly rounded up thousands of Jews trapped in the former Italian Zone and shipped them first to Drancy, then Auschwitz.

In her memoirs, one survivor recalls the period with simple poignancy: "It seemed like Eden there." Sadly, it did not last. ■

Harvey Starkman is a Toronto-based writer.

Married with Kids

Emancipate me from all this stuff

Lauren Kramer

My husband has a special name for me: the Chucker. Leave anything lying around too long and there's a good chance I will make it disappear into a recycling or donation bin. The reason is simple: we have way too much stuff and no matter how hard I protest, recycle and chuck, it just keeps accumulating.

I feel buried under the psychological weight of managing, sorting and sifting through so many things. Our possessions entangle me, enmeshing me like our large bin of electrical cords that have long since lost the items they were supposed to power and instead weave together in a thick knot of black wiring that takes hours to undo.

I've long sworn off trying to have more things, certain in the knowledge that most things quickly lose their appeal. So when birthdays, anniversaries, mothers days and any opportunities to celebrate punctuate the year, I request experiences, rather than possessions. "Let's go out and do something fun," I say. Or, when the occasion warrants it, "let's get on a plane!"

I'm packing bags as I write this, heady at the thought of an impending family adventure in Vietnam, a perfect celebration of my husband's birthday. With our kids in tow, the journey will be exciting, challenging, engaging and bursting at the seams with enriching cultural interactions.

I suspect few of us have enduring memories of the material gifts we've received over our lifetimes. After all, how much meaning can we possibly extract from another tie, a briefcase, a bottle of perfume or the latest, must-have technological gizmo? The excitement of new stuff wears off quickly, even more so when it's an object made for short-term durability.

But family moments together, exploring new destinations, venturing down unknown paths and stepping beyond the safe havens of our immediate environments

> *Few of us have enduring memories of the material gifts we've received*

– these have a magical quality that leaves precious, long-lasting memories. Almost always, there's some adversity along the way: missed flights, a bout of food poisoning, inclement weather or plans that don't work out as seamlessly as they're supposed to. Despite this, the journeys are richly rewarding, laden with learning, surprise encounters and conversations that would never happen under other circumstances.

We live in a society in which we're constantly encouraged to have more. We're barraged with insidious messages through television, radio and online, messages that insist we can't be happy unless we upgrade to something new. New clothes. A better phone. Glossier lipstick, or the beauty treatment that removes every last hair, obliterates every last wrinkle. We're taught that our very existence should be based on a hunger for more stuff, creating an insatiable appetite to accumulate, in order to keep up.

It's all so pointless, this interminable shopping. As I edge closer to 50, I feel an urgent desire to be emancipated from more stuff. And nowhere do I feel freer and more invigorated than when I'm traveling, reaching into the history, food, culture and language of other countries and trying earnestly to better understand the world. The opportunity to travel is the ultimate gift, and it's one that keeps giving through nostalgia and unforgettable memories.

So next year, forget the mall when it comes time to give a gift. Book an experience with the one you love, be it a cooking class, a weekend away, a night at the theatre or a trip to that far-flung destination you've always wanted to visit. Give them the gift of time and experience, instead of more stuff. Life is so short. It's a pity to waste it shopping. ■

OBITUARIES AND RELATED NOTICES

BENJAMIN'S PARK MEMORIAL CHAPEL

Linda Stein	Dec 20/19	50 Ruddington Drive
Ruth Levine	Dec 20/19	1066 Avenue Road
Judy Finkelstein	Dec 19/19	133 Torresdale Avenue
Frederick Fedder	Dec 20/19	56 Wyndfield Crescent
Beverly Ann Rosenberg	Dec 19/19	200 Kenneth Hobbs Ave
Roslyn Harris	Dec 19/19	319 Merton Street
Jonathon Glick	Dec 20/19	1001 Queen Street West
Samiylo Pekurovskiy	Dec 21/19	6101 Bathurst Street
Arthur Muscovitch	Dec 23/19	343 Berkeley Street
Joseph Frieberg	Dec 22/19	4 Burton Road
Patricia Eppel	Dec 22/19	40 Old Mill Road
Bertha Rosen	Dec 23/19	103 Hove Street
Eva Kay	Dec 25/19	205 Cummer Avenue
Hannelore (Laura) Simon	Dec 24/19	5 Kenneth Avenue
Albert Brown	Dec 24/19	55 Prince Arthur Avenue
Emanuel Vozner	Dec 26/19	99 Harbour Square
Liza Revzina	Dec 27/19	40 Baif Boulevard
Dr Murray Waldman	Dec 26/19	90 Leuty Avenue
Phyllis Rash	Dec 28/19	19 Lower Village Gate
Eleanor Rinne	Dec 27/19	7601 Bathurst Street
Lisa Haberman	Dec 26/19	182 Wright Avenue
Eli Levy	Dec 28/19	26 Horsham Avenue
Jeffrey Neiman	Dec 27/19	18 Angie Place
Esther Sofer	Dec 30/19	87 Old Colony Road

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Melvyn (Mel) Rubinstein	Dec 28/19	550 Cummer Ave.
Robert Fruitman	Dec 25/19	550 Cummer Ave.
Lois Orkin	Dec 29/19	16 Edgar Ave.

STEELES MEMORIAL CHAPEL

Malitzky, Ruth Marilyn	Dec. 15, 2019	Private
Korol, Nekhama	Dec. 7, 2019	18 Shenstone Road
Tepperman, Phyllis (Peshy)	Dec. 7, 2019	60 Hammerstone Cres
Grinberg, Simyon	Dec. 8, 2019	Private
Zolty, Morris	Dec. 8, 2019	45 Fairholme Ave
Reicher, Mania	Dec. 8, 2019	65 Spring Garden Ave
Greengruz, Moshe	Dec. 8, 2019	120 Promenade Circle
Serfaty, Joseph	Dec. 9, 2019	700 Summeridge Dr
Falk, Matilda	Dec. 9, 2019	Private
Stummer, Helga	Dec. 9, 2019	90 Wigmore Dr
Fleising, Guta	Dec. 11, 2019	16 Windborne Rd

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'A talented lady in a man's world'

Reva Gerstein broke through the glass ceiling. **PAGE 12**

PLUS: Leo Kolber's life. **PAGE 13**

Scoring a hat trick of good deeds

Jewish and indigenous hockey players team up to give back to those in need. **PAGE 18**

Turmoil in the Middle East

After downing Flight 752, pressure mounts against Tehran. **PAGES 6, 19-21**

A page a day keeps the doctor away

Thousands celebrate completion of the daf yomi cycle. **PAGE 17**

R2R: High-tech learning. **PAGE 4**

AN ACTIVIST IN ISRAEL

A Canadian decides to fight for progressive values by making aliyah. **PAGE 5**

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Quotable

“ [redacted]

— Larry David, speaking to Stephen Colbert about the election prospects for his distant cousin, Bernie Sanders.

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Trending

Generation X's oversharing laureate

Elizabeth Wurtzel, whose 1994 book *Prozac Nation* became the standard for a generation of confessional memoirs, died on Jan. 7 at age 52, due to complications of breast cancer. And like all her other life experiences, Wurtzel wrenchingly wrote about that diagnosis and struggle, along with discovering that her biological father was famed photographer Bob Adelman. *Prozac Nation* was made into a film starring Christina Ricci, which premiered in Toronto in 2001; its theatrical release was cancelled after backlash to comments Wurtzel made about 9/11 to Jan Wong of the *Globe and Mail*, about how she felt like "everyone was overreacting."

Generation to generation of Levys

Schitt's Creek launched its sixth and final season on Jan. 7, on CBC Television in Canada, concurrent with the U.S. channel Pop TV, and its rise merited a feature in the *New York Times*. Such attention seemed elusive when it premiered as a Canadian show in 2014, despite the roles of SCTV veterans Eugene Levy and Catherine O'Hara, although Levy soon ceded his writers' room role to co-star son Daniel Levy. Thanks to Netflix, the elder Levy realized the show reached a tipping point when people who approached him in public mentioned Schitt's, rather than his role in teen comedy *American Pie*, or the two left feet of his character in *Best in Show*.

DLR jumps into senior citizenship

David Lee Roth kicked off his Las Vegas residency on Jan. 8 with a 15-song set that includes 10 Van Halen classics, and five songs from his 1980s solo career. Rebooting his own act comes five years after his original band's reunion tapered off. Roth, 65, confirmed that guitarist Eddie Van Halen is "not doing well" due to health challenges, adding that "singing and dancing is a perishable skill." Later this year, Roth will serve as opening act for Kiss, reuniting him with the fellow Jewish rock icon who financed the original Van Halen demo tape, Gene Simmons. ■

Compiled by Marc Weisblott of CJN Today, our email newsletter. CJNews.com/today

Gematria

14

The number of years that Terri Libenson spent on *The Pajama Diaries*, the syndicated comic strip narrated by her suburban mom alter ego, Jill Kaplan, until it came to the end of its run on Jan. 4.

10

The number of times that Buck Henry hosted *Saturday Night Live* between 1975 and 1980, a record in its original iteration. The comedy legend, born Henry Zuckerman, died on Jan. 8 at age 89.

146

The number of episodes of *The Nanny*, which originally aired on CBS between 1993 and 1999. Fran Drescher, its co-creator and star, is currently helping to adapt the sitcom into a Broadway musical.

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Letters to the Editor

To welcome into the fold?

I understand Rabbi Denise Handlarski's interest in seeking acceptance from the Toronto Board of Rabbis ("Why won't the Toronto Board of Rabbis welcome me?" Opinion, Dec. 19). What concerns me is that she minimizes the significance of Jewish continuity.

She must acknowledge that the primary reason the Jewish people have endured over the centuries – while the Greek, Roman, Persian, Babylonian and Assyrian civilizations have fallen – is because of our adherence to the Torah, along with our other written and oral laws. Respectfully, I can't help but wonder what the world would look like today if the "watered down" version of the religion initiated by an individual born in Nazareth had adhered to the Torah's path.

Debbie Bauer
Toronto

I was incensed when I read Rabbi Denise Handlarski's column. We, the Jewish people, must be inclusive of all Jews, regardless of the differences in how they practice Judaism and notwithstanding the rules they observe, as we are all Jews.

We are the victims of the rise in global anti-Semitism. We are dismayed at the number of incidents of discrimination perpetrated against members of our faith that are reported almost every day. The situation on campuses is deplorable. The phrase "Never Again" does not inspire the confidence it once did. We must stand together.

The Oraynu Congregation for Humanistic Judaism is a vibrant synagogue that fosters Jewish identity. The Toronto Board of Rabbis should reconsider its position and invite Rabbi Handlarski to join them, since doing so will make our community stronger.

Jocelyn Cooper
Thornhill, Ont.

The trouble with Orthodoxy

Rabbi Asher Vale writes that, "Orthodox people involved in outreach efforts will tell you that ... by properly explaining ancient rituals to unaffiliated Jews and presenting them in a non-coercive fashion, many will embrace them" ("The Hanukkah observance paradox," Comment, Dec. 26). There is, however, no proof whatsoever of this statement.

Rabbi Vale is a typical Orthodox Jew: he is so convinced of the correctness of his position that he thinks the rest of us are eager to become Orthodox Jews, as well. As for "presenting them in a non-coercive fashion," this assertion is just plain silly, as coercion is part and parcel of Orthodoxy.

David Pinto
Montreal

I trust an Orthodox rabbi to ignore the evidence in his (always his) face, in order to elaborate on the obscure. If there were a single menorah on sale with space for only one candle, someone would buy it. The "universal practise" of lighting more than one candle each night is universal because it fits the only style of menorah available to us. It has nothing to do with piety.

Phil Palter
Toronto

The CJN PODCAST NETWORK

You're already reading The CJN – now you can listen to it. The CJN Podcast Network delivers weekly audio shows straight to your smartphone, computer or tablet. Here's what we're talking about this week:

An anti-Semitism watchdog organization voted U.S. Congresswoman Ilhan Omar "anti-Semite of the year." But is she really? Plus, Michael and Alex flip through the pages of history to commemorate 60 years of The CJN

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It's never been easier!

The recent completion of another cycle of daily Talmud study highlights the innovations that have been made to make this classic Jewish text more accessible than ever before.

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KEHILLAT SHAAREI TORAH, TORONTO

Siyum ha-Shas in New Jersey, WIKIMEDIA COMMON[illegible]

Rabbi Kanofsky: Jews in Canada and the world over marked the *siyum ha-Shas* this month, celebrating in song, dance, prayer and study the learning of each of the Talmud's 2,711 pages, one per day, over seven and a half years. The brainchild of the great Rabbi Meir Shapiro of Lublin, Poland, the project was launched in 1923.

Since then, participants have made their way through the Talmud 13 times. The 14th cycle is now underway, and it could and should be a reminder to every Jew and every community to review and "up their game" in regular, even daily, engagement with Judaism's classic texts.

Rabbi Landsberg: The Talmud should be one of Judaism's classic texts for Jews of all orientations. It is classic in the sense that Italo Calvino described in an essay published in the *New York Review of Books* in 1986, entitled "Why Read the Classics."

"A classic is a book that has never finished what it has to say," wrote Calvino. "The classics are the books that come down to us bearing upon them the traces of readings previous to ours, and bringing in their wake the traces they themselves have left on the culture or cultures they have passed through.... The classics are books that we find all the more new, fresh and unexpected upon reading, the more we thought we knew them from hearing them talked about."

In truth, within the Reform movement, it is only a relatively recent development that Talmud has been reclaimed as such a classic. Many liberal synagogues, though, have offered weekly Talmud classes for decades. Yet I think that an imaginative leap still must be made by many Jews for them to envision regular Talmud study as a vibrant part of their Jewish life.

You and I have spoken before about the ways in which Jews can seem very "other" to each other. I think that there are many Jews for whom the press coverage of the *siyum ha-Shas*, with pictures of thousands of black-hatted men gathered to mark the occasion, does not automatically remind them as to why *they* might want to "up their game" with Judaism's classic texts.

Rabbi Kanofsky: I like to say that in Judaism you find the opposite of the old western movies: here, it's the good guys who are wearing the black hats. That's another way of noting that the fact that Talmud study is publicly and frequently engaged in by Jews wearing black hats is a flimsy excuse at best to avoid it.

In an age of Internet access to nearly anything and everything, a truly open-minded Jew should be dedicating time regularly to growing intellectually and spiritually, using the digital tools at hand to start somewhere. The starting point itself is much less important than the fact that it's a point of departure.

Any person who studies in the *daf yomi* and/or any other regular program of study makes an implicit claim: "I have more to learn. By opening this text and engaging with its contents, I hope to become more learned, more connected to God."

The first step, or even getting to the first step, is often the hardest, because we have to step out of ourselves and our comfort zones.

Rabbi Landsberg: Social media and Google searches can open new and unexpected worlds into Jewish learning, including a Facebook group called Jewish Women Daf Yomi About Anything (now approximately 500 members strong) and *daf yomi* lectures at hadran.org.il ("Talmud for Women, by Women"). There are also *daf yomi* podcasts and apps.

And that is not the only mode of engaging in deep yet accessible learning. Sefaria.org offers options for daily study of the Mishnah, halakhah and Maimonides in addition to *daf yomi* (plus an option to learn a Talmud page per week). Prospective learners can go through the prophets, one chapter a day, on 929.org.il, with diverse essays from outstanding scholars and teachers. One can commit 10 minutes a day, or an hour or more.

The world of classic Jewish texts is available as never before. And so Hillel's classic question challenges us anew: "If not now, when?" ■

My revelation is my revolution

Why I gave up life in Canada to fight for progressive values in Israel

DAFNA STRAUSS
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

I was 15 years old when I heard that Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin had been shot and killed by a Jew. I was shocked, but a girl who I was with at a Bnei Akiva youth group program felt safe enough to publicly say that, "They shoulda got the bastard a long time ago."

Her words shook me as much as the assassination itself. That she and I came from the same modern Orthodox community in the Toronto suburb of Thornhill made me question which of us truly belonged. Who had the right views on Israeli politics, and who had the right to *have* views?

When I was 18, I was studying at a midrasha (religious seminary) in Israel. I had spent a few years as a contrarian – on feminism, religious hypocrisy and what should matter to teenage girls – so nobody was surprised when I poured cold water all over the stories my peers brought back after spending Shabbat in Hebron. To them, armed, radical Jews were bad asses. To me, they were provocateurs.

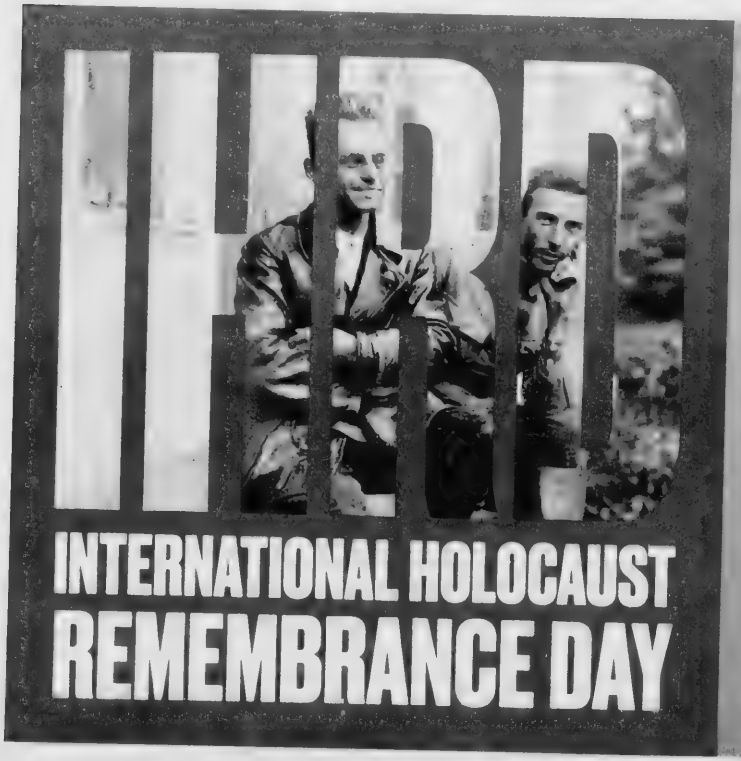
I disapproved of their vigilantism out of my concern for the state. Israel is a homeland to be managed carefully, not a staging ground for outlaw cowboy fantasies.

• • •

When it comes to Israel, for me, the political is deeply personal. Israel provided a home, community and new identity for my grandparents after they lost almost everything and everyone in the Holocaust. I'm still moved by the idealistic, early-state classics my mom sings along to on the radio on Yom ha-Zikaron and Yom ha-Atzmaut. Old guys in undershirts arguing in Hebrew are my lullabies. I love seeing the culture evolve from the familiar, dusty and scrappy, to the new, cosmopolitan and astonishing.

And I'm deeply steeped in Israeli culture. My childhood friends were the children of *shlichim* – the Israelis who come to Toronto, and other cities, to teach at Jewish schools. I grew up with walkathons, letters to my cousins in Israel, school assemblies for Zionist holidays and worrying about Ron Arad.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



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The Volunteer: One Man, an Underground Army, and the Secret Mission to Destroy Auschwitz

Bestselling author and war reporter, **Jack Fairweather**, presents the remarkable but largely unknown story of Witold Pilecki, a Polish resistance fighter who worked undercover in Auschwitz to sabotage the camp from within.

[redacted]

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Turmoil in Iran renews need for Canadian action

In just over a week's time, Canada will mark the 40th anniversary of one of its more celebrated overseas achievements – the rescue and eventual extraction of six American diplomats during the Iran hostage crisis. The Canadian mission in Tehran hid the Americans for nearly three months until a joint operation with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, depicted in the 2012 Hollywood blockbuster *Argo*, could usher them out of revolutionary Iran. The hostage crisis would conclude almost exactly one year later with the freeing of the 52 remaining Americans.

(Lesser known is the fact that Ken Taylor, the celebrated Canadian ambassador to Iran, also agreed to represent Israeli interests during that tumultuous period, to which an adviser to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini responded, "Are you out of your mind?" Nonetheless, Taylor took on the responsibility, saying, as documented in historian Robert Wright's account of Canada's role in the hostage crisis, *Our Man in Tehran*, "We were prepared to do something if (the Israelis) got into trouble.")

The anniversary of the end of the hostage crisis is marked annually in Iran by the burning of the American flag and demonstrations at the former U.S. embassy in Tehran, now a museum to the Islamic Revolution. It will be interesting to see whether that tradition holds true this year amid growing popular protests across Iran. Over the weekend, as Iranians took to the streets to challenge their leaders, video showed protesters carefully sidestepping the Stars and Stripes – as well as the Israeli flag – as they marched.

Just days earlier, Iranians had marked the death of Maj.-Gen. Qassem Solei mani, the commander of Iran's Quds Force assassinated in a rocket attack by the United States. Millions attended his multi-day interment procession, the country's largest funeral since Khomeini's in 1989. Iranian leaders grieved for a notorious terrorist who was, by all accounts, instrumental in propping up Bashar Assad's regime during the Syrian Civil War, as well as the arming of terror groups like Hezbollah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was seen crying over Soleimani's casket.

> "

And then news started trickling out that Ukraine International Airlines Flight PS752 had crashed just minutes after takeoff. By the time the sun rose last Thursday, it was becoming abundantly clear that all 176 passengers aboard the plane, including 57 Canadian citizens and a total of 138 passengers en route to our country, had been killed by an Iranian missile. It took Tehran two more days to admit it had shot down the plane – a "disastrous mistake" according to a regime official – by which point the crash site had reportedly been compromised.

Since the downing of PS752, Canadians have learned a lot about those poor souls who never made it back here. So many of them – students on university campuses, professionals with burgeoning families – were working to make a better life in Canada. Their deaths are incomprehensible to all Canadians (no matter who exactly they blame for that outcome). At a Toronto vigil over the weekend, one mourner, whose brother, a married father of two, died on the plane, said, "There is no justice in this world. I don't believe in anything anymore."

Make no mistake: Iran's actions have drawn Canada into the Mideast tinder box in a significant way. It is incumbent upon our leaders to keep the pressure on Iran – not only to ensure some sort of fair investigation and compensation in this tragedy, but to bolster the case against its bloodstained regime of terror. We can't ever bring back those souls snuffed out over Tehran, and that's why we should do everything possible to call Iran to account. ■ — YONI

From the Archives

Community volunteers

ONTARIO JEWISH ARCHIVES, BLANKENSTEIN FAMILY HERITAGE CENTRE, UJA FEDERATION OF GREATER TORONTO

Baycrest volunteer Blanche Adelberg, centre, dances with a day resident at the weekly rehabilitative music program run by George Frank and his wife, in Toronto, April 1964.

SeeJN

Take to the slopes

BASEL AWIDAT/FLASH90 PHOTO

Israelis ski and snowboard after snow fell on Mt. Hermon and the ski site opened for the season in northern Israel on Jan. 11.

Essay

Keeping the faith in Kenya

Adam Hummel

Eleven years ago, I travelled to Kenya for the first time as part of a "volun tourism" mission. I spent three weeks in rural Kenya participating in activities and getting to know people who were curious about life outside the country, just as I was curious about their lives.

As with all my travels, I was wary about disclosing my Jewish faith in Kenya. Alone in the countryside, unsure how my religious identification would be perceived or accepted, I decided to keep quiet and left my Magen David necklace in my suitcase.

However, shortly after I arrived in this Christian-majority country, one of my hosts, Leonard, noticed my unfamiliarity with their religious customs. I mentioned that I was Jewish, and that was that.

The next day, I found myself in a picturesque field in the countryside learning how to pick tea leaves with a woman named Marion, who I had befriended on the trip. Harvesting tea is done by kneeling down next to the short plant and pulling off two leaves and a bud at a time. This collection goes into a bag, which goes to a factory to be dried out and processed.

I was kneeling in the dirt chatting with Marion. We were talking about the recent post-election violence that swept across her country in early 2008 and she was telling me about her friends who were impacted by the bloodshed. Our banter had gone silent for a few moments while I got the hang of tea harvesting, when suddenly Marion asked, "Do you know what the parashah is this week?"

I dropped the leaves I was holding and asked her how on earth she knew what a parashah was, and how she knew that I was Jewish.

Adam Hummel, centre left, visits Marion, right, in Kenya in 2008.

> *They treated my faith as an older brother to theirs and treated me accordingly.*

Leonard had told her I was Jewish, but she told me that her father, Samuel, was the head of a congregation nearby that practised what is essentially Messianic Judaism. They believe in the values of Judaism and Christianity, observe the Jewish Sabbath, fast on Yom Kippur and meet regularly to study Torah.

Blown away, I told her that unfortunately, I did not know what the parashah was that week.

Over the next few days, I learned that I had nothing to fear about identifying as Jewish in that small community. News of my religious affiliation spread, and I was asked many questions about my faith, beliefs and history, and was welcomed as "Brother Adam" with open arms to a Saturday morning prayer session. I was invited to speak about the parashah – which I discovered was Dvarim – and told them that it began with Moses' summary of the 40 years spent wandering in the desert.

I told them that Moses recalled the episode of the 12 spies who were recruited to enter Israel and return with a favourable report. Though 10 of the 12 returned with tall tales, I told Marion's family that, like Joshua and Caleb, I would return to Canada as a "Jewish spy" in Kenya, with stories about how wonderful their country is. We laughed, and over three subsequent visits to Kenya, my experience with Marion's family remains one of my fondest memories of my time there.

Through them, I learned a fundamental lesson about how Jews are perceived in different parts of the world. I was welcomed as an ambassador of my faith. They viewed my faith as an older brother to theirs and treated me accordingly. It was humbling and reminded me that Jews need not always be afraid of their shadows.

Many years have passed and I had not thought about the experience for some time. However, on Aug. 22, 2019, Marion tragically died from a heart attack at the age of 36.

I recall her friendship, her warmth, her laughter and her dedication to both family and faith. I credit her with the comfort that I felt on that first, and all subsequent, visits to Kenya. She and her family showed me that sparks of Judaism reside in even the remotest of regions. She was the definition of an *eishet chayil*, a woman of valour.

Importantly, since that first encounter with Marion, I've always made a point of checking what the parashah is for the week. In honour of Marion, I note that the parashah for the week she died was Eikev.

In that chapter, Moses once again reminds the Israelites to "love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." Well, Marion did just that, not only with me, but with the many other volunteers who passed through her village, as well.

She reminded me that despite the headlines and animosity from some quarters, in many others, our faith is respected, our traditions are revered and our belief in loving strangers is universal. ■

Adam Hummel is a Toronto lawyer, and a member of the World Jewish Congress' Jewish Diplomatic Corps.

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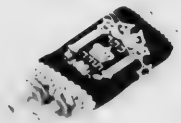

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'I refuse to be alienated from what's mine'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

When I was 12, I spent a summer with my grandparents in Netanya, Israel. On Shabbat afternoons, I'd often look through a shoe box filled with my mother's old photos from her childhood in early Israel.

Israel is where half my background and half my family is. I always identified with it strongly.

Gradually, though, I found myself moving away from mainstream Jewish-Canadian views on Israel. I stayed away from Israel-related community events and often kept quiet in discussions about Israeli politics, but sometimes reminded people that many Israelis criticize their government's policies in a way that is suppressed in Jewish Canada.

It wasn't just the conflict with the Palestinians that troubled me. I was also concerned by the religious strong-arming of a secular population, corruption in the government and discriminatory policies in Israel proper.

I've always loved my other country and I celebrate the tremendous accomplishments of its citizens. But growing up in Thornhill, it felt like there was only one accepted way to be a Zionist: unnuanced, unflinching approval of everything the country did (except the peace plan). I didn't know the name for it then, but I was a progressive Zionist and couldn't find my ideological peers in observant circles in Toronto.

As an adult, I considered living in Israel, but didn't want to pay taxes that would support the occupation. I hoped that, over time, Israelis would fix the situation, that things would get better in my lifetime and that we'd live in peace in the halcyon days described by all those old folk songs. So I stayed on the sidelines for a long time and watched Israel's prospects for peace deteriorate from the Rabin days.

Meanwhile, I found myself in a great career, working as a lobbyist for First Nations governments, helping them navigate the Canadian political system to accomplish their goals and assert their priorities. Helping repair the damage my country had done to people was fulfilling work. I just kept hoping for Israel to make a similar turnaround. But things only seemed to be getting worse.

Then, in October 2019, I made aliyah. What changed? First of all, my feelings of responsibility to my people. My work focused a lot on "nation-building." It's the long game that First Nations are working at to reclaim their authority and assert their right to make fundamental determinations for themselves – how they express their cultures through their institutions, what it means to have a modern nation embedded with their values, practising their traditions on their holidays, doing family the way they do.

> *It's too important a place to allow it to wane in the drama, democracy arise and values arise.*

As I listened to my First Nations colleagues talk about the importance of living in your language, knowing your culture, giving agency to your values and passing them to the next generation, and thriving under self-determination, my thoughts turned to my own nation, language and culture, and how it's expressed in a Jewish homeland.

I began thinking about how important it is to have a place for full Jewish expression and variation; a place that's perhaps not modelled on one set of Jewish values because one can't honestly claim anything is coherent or singular in Israel but that's expressive of the many Jewish and a few non-Jewish) cultures that have co-developed a pretty impressive society together. Israel is that place-in-progress.

We each have but one life, and if we're lucky, there comes a time when we're not treading water and we can ask ourselves what we want to do with our lives. My one guide is the campsite rule – leave it (the world) better than you found it.

I had been doing that in Canada, in drips and drabs. I've sent indigenous chiefs into Jewish classrooms, organized blanket exercises and hosted "I'm First Nations Ask Me Anything" dinners, to help us understand each other. I co-created an interfaith feminist group, a minyan and a not-for-profit to help create practical ties between Jewish and indigenous communities.

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And aside from institutions, I hope I've brought good into the world with every gentle interaction, every empathetic conversation, every action that supports a more positive civic culture. All my efforts were being banked to Canadian society, because I lived there. But I started thinking: If Israeli society needs help, why not bank my efforts in Israel?

I also started to see the need for Jewish self-determination from a longer historical view and from a family perspective. I often tuned out when Canadian Jews spoke about anti-Semitism, because it's something I heard about constantly, but never experienced.

As I matured and took a greater interest in my family history, and read more about all the Jewish history that happened after biblical times and before the Holocaust, I came to respect Jewish resiliency and love the variety of Jewish cultures that have blossomed and survived around the world. I came to realize that the final product created by this mix of every kind of beautiful Jewishness is in Israel, not Canada.

At the same time, a space has begun to be carved within mainstream Jewish-Canadian discourse for expressing progressive Zionist values. So instead of leaving Israel to the radicals and just visiting on vacation, I feel sturdier in my stance, because I'm not standing alone. And as Israeli civil society gets more polarized, and the government flirts with anti-democratic initiatives, the issues become existential. I can't shut up and I refuse to be alienated from what's mine.

Many progressives are abandoning Israel, but for all these reasons, I'm doubling down. It's too important a place to allow it to circle the drain, democracy-wise and values-wise. I've left the sidelines because we've only got one shot at this thing, our existential group project, and it needs everyone's participation.

I don't know what my action plan is and I don't expect to lead a revolution. After all, now I'm just one leftist living in a leftist oasis in Tel Aviv. Still, I think that just being present in Israel is the best anyone can offer.

When Israelis talk about the demographic war, they mean Arab versus Jew. But I think the struggle is really between populism and an open society. As Israel's mainstream drifts away from democracy, and Canadian Jews remain progressive on the whole, the solution is a liberal aliyah – because, *yallah*, Israel needs more Canada. ■

Dafna Strauss made aliyah in October 2019. She lives in Tel Aviv.

The author in Akko. COURTESY OF DAFNA STRAUSS

The failure of Holocaust education

Avrum Rosensweig

The Jewish people are learned – Jews all over the world just completed a seven and a half year *daf yomi* cycle, which involves studying a page of the Talmud every day. We are innovative – the best example of that is the establishment of the State of Israel and, more recently, the launch of more Israeli startups than all the countries in the European Union combined. Yet, while we are special, we also have our foibles.

One of them is the lack of courage and a willingness to be activists on the part of Diaspora Jews. Most of us were not taught to defend ourselves. Therefore, when we are challenged by outside aggression, our first response is often immobility and a passing off of our responsibilities. This, I believe, stems from the fact that many of us were born following the Holocaust, which was a quieter moment in history for the Jewish people, a time when we could pursue a gentle approach to life.

Most Jews are not activists fighting on behalf of ourselves or others. This, I think, emanates from a current weakness in Holocaust education. Holocaust education has for decades encouraged us to simply "remember" the atrocities committed against our people. We did this by regularly attending movies like *Schindler's List*, reading books about survivors and attending lectures by Holocaust experts to hear the reasons for such things as the Allies' lack of will to bomb the train tracks to Auschwitz.

For years, we've sat in halls packed to the rafters with people listening to the Holocaust educator's every word. Then we exited the place feeling awful about anti-Semitism and what was done to us. But very few of us did something valuable and necessary for the Jewish people and that was aligning our remembrance with a commitment to act.

We were satisfied with reading articles and bemoaning our fate, instead of taking our angst and turning it into a process of developing a Diaspora army of sorts, one that would do such things as walk the streets of Toronto and Montreal, to protect our brothers and sisters going to shul on Shabbat, like Shomrim in the U.K.

> "We were unwilling to fight the anti-Semites, the awful, hateful people who recognize our weakness – our inability to fight back."

Holocaust education began failing us at some point. While it gave our people a chance to mourn and embrace the survivors, it did not live up to our commitment of "Never Again" – that if we were to see an injustice happening to the Jewish people, or others, we would actively fight against it.

I love the Jewish people with all my heart. I am therefore very worried about anti-Semitism and our response to it. I am also anxious because our community's focus on remembering has left us without an inclusive, well-thought-out plan to deal with modern-day anti-Semitism. And if there is such a plan, very few members of our community know of it and feel safer because of it.

Simply put, we are not ready to fight the anti-Semites, the awful, hateful people who recognize our weakness – our inability to fight back. They are not afraid of us at least not yet.

I call upon our rabbis, organizational workers and every single Jew to emulate the bravery of the little boy who climbed over the Warsaw Ghetto walls to find bread for his starving family – not just to remember him. I encourage you to look at your own response to the Holocaust and ask yourself if you are prepared to be a Jewish soldier and live up to your commitment of "Never Again."

Enough of just remembering. Activism is what will protect us and sustain us. *Am Yisra'el Chai*! ■

Do you disagree with our columnists? Have your say by writing to **cjninfo@gmail.com.**

Blame Israel's leaders for the stalemate

Rabbi Dow Marmur

Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's longest-serving prime minister, is arguably the country's most powerful person and has an enviable international reputation. Yet he sees himself as a victim – of the media, the police and the judiciary. He has responded to the criminal charges against him by calling for an investigation of the investigators.

During their recent visit to Lisbon, while standing in front of the city's monument to the Inquisition some five centuries ago, his wife, Sara Netanyahu, told a reporter that she and her family are the victims of a modern-day inquisition.

In an almost pathetic effort to stay in power, Netanyahu has given important cabinet portfolios to some extreme right-wing party leaders not because of their competence, but as a reward for supporting him. And the man he appointed as minister of justice is committed to run his boss's errands by trying to limit the powers of police officers and judges.

As a result, no government can be formed. On March 2, there will be a general election in Israel, the third within a year. According to opinion polls so far, the result this time may not be markedly different from its two predecessors. Israelis may, therefore, go to the polls again a few months later.

Though Netanyahu's refusal to retire and make room for another leader for his Likud party is a major cause of the upcoming election, it's by no means the only one.

The leaders of the opposing Blue and White party could have made it possible to form a unity government by allowing Netanyahu to stay on as prime minister for another few months, with or without immunity from prosecution, and afterwards support a plea bargain that would save him from going to jail.

Such a deal, even if questionable in some ways, would be good for Israel not only because it would make it possible to form a stable government, but also because imprisoning another prime minister (after Ehud Olmert) would be bad for Israel's morale and its image on the international stage.

> "They're prone to disguise their ambitions in lofty, patriotic and principled proclamations."

Another possibility would have been for Avigdor Liberman, the leader of the Yisrael Beiteinu party, to join Netanyahu's right-wing government by tolerating the ultra-Orthodox members of the coalition, as he had done in the past.

Many of Liberman's supporters are immigrants from the former Soviet Union whose Jewish status is often questioned by the Orthodox establishment. As scandalous as this is, having only a caretaker government, which is the result of these inconclusive elections, may be more damaging to the country than Liberman's concession.

In other words, Israel need not have been in the political mess in which it currently finds itself had its leaders been willing to make some concessions for the greater good of the country. Netanyahu could have resigned; Blue and White could have allowed him to stay in power for a while; Yisrael Beiteinu could have joined his coalition.

But though politicians tell us that they're there to serve the country and its citizens, too many seem mainly concerned about themselves. They're prone to disguise their ambitions in lofty, patriotic and principled proclamations. What they deem to be the ideal is often the enemy of the good.

They may endanger Israel and, God forbid, become instruments in the possible destruction of the Jewish state. Most of the world's Jews now live in Israel and those who are in the Diaspora depend in countless ways on Israel's existence and prosperity. When Israel is in danger, all Jews are at risk.

The biblical prophets tell us repeatedly that the destruction of ancient Israel was largely caused by its own leaders. History may be repeating itself. Therefore, it behooves us all to find ways to bypass our contemporary politicians and unmask their real intentions, in order to thwart them. Though this can only be done by Israelis themselves, they'll need much help and support from their sisters and brothers in the Diaspora. ■

The four strains of modern anti-Semitism

Benjamin Shinewald

Anti-Semitism is a virus and there are four main strains that are currently spreading around the world.

The first strain comes from the left. This is the strain spread by U.K. Labour Leader Jeremy Corbyn and campus activists. Left-wing politics revolve around inclusivity, tolerance and redistribution. At the extreme, however, left-wing politics harnesses anger and fosters self-righteousness to confront perceived oppressors.

In this worldview, Israel is seen as the powerful oppressor. These anti-Semites single out the Jewish state for condemnation and, as this strain mutates, they sometimes single out Jews, as well. As a result, left-wing anti-Semites deeply believe that they stand for diversity and inclusion, even as they espouse abject anti-Semitism.

Left-wing anti-Semitism is, therefore, the most deceptive strain, since some of its adherents actually believe they are not anti-Semitic, and many cloak their anti-Semitism in otherwise legitimate critiques of Israel.

The second strain of anti-Semitism comes from the right. This is the strain of political strongmen, and of the killers in the Pittsburgh and Poway, Calif., synagogue massacres, who became radicalized after being exposed to such politics.

Right-wing politics used to revolve around a combination of capitalism, individualism and resistance to non-incremental change. Today, though, this has been largely displaced by exclusionary nativism, chauvinism and nationalism – call it Trumpism.

As a result, right-wing anti-Semites reject Jews because we do not fit into their nativist vision at home, but embrace Israel for fitting into their nativist vision abroad. Right-wing anti-Semitism is, therefore, the most insidious strain, since many right-wing anti-Semites hate Jews but love Israel.

The third strain of anti-Semitism is Islamist. This is the strain spread by Iran's leadership and the terrorists they fund and direct. While Islam is an ancient religion, Islamism is a modern form of fundamentalist colonialism. It aspires to violently advance its own supremacy on non-Muslims and on non-conforming Muslims.

As a result, Islamists view both Jews and the State of Israel as mere obstacles in the path to Islamist hegemony. Islamist anti-Semitism is, therefore, the most overt strain, since Islamists don't distinguish the Jewish state from the Jewish people, and place both high on their hit list.

The fourth and final strain of anti-Semitism is irregular. This is the strain spread by the attackers of the JC Kosher Supermarket in New Jersey and on the Rottenberg family's Hanukkah party in New York. This variant of anti-Semitism is sometimes associated with cults or mental illness, but it is driven by many other factors, as well.

As a result, the irregular anti-Semite lacks rationality. These individuals, sometimes inexplicably, suddenly have an urge to kill Jews. Irregular anti-Semitism is the most unpredictable strain, since its sources are so scattered and decentralized.

These four strains of anti-Semitism – the deceptive leftist strain, the insidious right-wing strain, the overt Islamist strain and the unpredictable irregular strain – do not sit in airtight containers. Anti-Semitism is a live virus and these four strains are not historical, they are just today's variants and they are always mutating and mixing. And they never, ever remain dormant.

On the left, despite their humiliating loss in the recent British election, angry activists remain as energized as ever, searching for the next target of their vitriol.

On the right, the biggest strongman of all, U.S. President Donald Trump, keeps pushing the belligerent envelope, last month telling a Jewish audience that, "You're brutal killers, not nice people at all. But you have to vote for me, you have no choice."

In the Islamist world, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps stated that the recent American assassination of Maj. Gen. Qassim Suleimani "open(s) a new chapter in the path of anti-Zionism resistance." In the Islamist view, if Americans kill Iranians, Jews must pay.

And as for the irregular strain of anti-Semitism, well, we are all just waiting for the next attack.

Right now, these four strains of anti-Semitism are mutating into some new variant that we can't yet discern. Like many biological viruses, today's anti-Semitism is mutating faster and faster and is becoming deadlier and deadlier. And like many biological viruses, there is no vaccination. ■

The real sources of Jew-hatred in America

Barbara Kay

On Dec. 30, the *Toronto Star* published a strange op-ed by *CJN* columnist Bernie Farber, titled Once Again, Jews Are Being Hunted. It concludes that, "By refusing to call out hatred, no matter its source, we ensure its continuation and its devastating effects." It's a fine sentiment, yet half the piece ignores the source of the present pogrom-like conditions in New York and New Jersey, while the other alleges a source of anti-Semitism that doesn't exist.

The events Farber begins with – the Jersey City supermarket murders, the Monsey, N.Y., Hanukkah stabbings, the random attacks on individual Jews in the streets of Brooklyn accompanied by vile slurs ("You f---ing Jew, your end is coming to you") – are part of an epidemic. To stop an epidemic, one studies its epidemiology. If the virus is infecting a particular demographic, that's important for the treatment plan. In this case, the demographic is overwhelmingly a rage-fuelled subsection of the area's African-American population. Farber elides that critical fact.

Elevated anti-Semitism amongst African-Americans is no secret. According to statistics from the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), African-Americans are nearly twice as likely to hold anti-Semitic views as non-black Americans. (In 2011, the ADL found that 29 per cent of African-Americans held anti-Semitic views, compared with 15 per cent of non-black Americans, though the numbers were less dramatic in its 2016 survey, when 23 per cent of blacks were found to harbour hatred toward Jews.)

I understand it's a delicate subject for progressives, but as the chair of the Canadian Anti-Hate Network (CAHN), whose mandate is to research and disseminate information on hate crimes, it is especially incumbent on Farber to demonstrate even-handedness and transparency in his public commentary.

But it's clear in this op-ed, and his other writings, that hate crimes perpetrated by whites against Jews are Farber's preferred spurs to outrage. And he's not alone: amongst progressive pundits, it's something of a fetish to steer the conversation away from targeted hatred emanating from visible minorities, in order to focus on hatred against visible minorities perpetrated by whites on the far right.

Farber's *Star* op-ed is a perfect illustration of that reflex. Halfway through, he segues abruptly to suggest that Jew-hatred was "kept in check" until U.S. President Donald Trump's election in 2016, strongly implying both that Trump is himself anti-Semitic and that he is responsible for the upsurge in anti-Semitism. (In fact, an ADL investigation of 360 New York-area anti-Semitic incidents revealed no links whatsoever to Trump, or to any alt-right influences).

Farber describes Trump as a "racist narcissist" who embraces "some of the worst anti-Semitic tropes." As evidence that Trump has "jumped the anti-Semitic shark," Farber cites Trump's well-received Dec. 8 talk to the Israel American Council, in which Trump "played the anti-Semitic canard of Jews and their money," saying "a lot of you are in the real estate business because I know you very well. You're brutal killers, not nice people at all."

But Farber omits the celebratory context that demolishes his allegation. Trump was jovially recalling the purchase of property for the American Embassy in Jerusalem. The mood was festive. In the transcript, it's clear that his purportedly "anti-Semitic" remarks are punctuated by "(laughter)" and "(applause)." Trump was kibitzing, and his Jewish audience loved it. (What politician would be crazy enough to publicly call his supporters "brutal killers" in earnest?)

Conversely, Farber has less to say about the well-documented anti-Semitism routinely displayed by influential Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan, who, in 2018, tweeted, "I'm not an anti-Semite. I'm anti-Termite" – and he wasn't kidding. Yet Farber warns us that "if Trump believes these ugly things about Jews (i.e., you Jews are as good as I am in real estate – in fact, a compliment), then something must be done."

Farber's op-ed is unbalanced and arguably libellous against President Trump. But it is all the more troubling for what it implies about CAHN's guiding conventions. If CAHN's spokesman will only publicly condemn white anti-Semitism and allege anti-Semitism where no evidence of it exists, based solely on political bias, CAHN is unworthy of the public's confidence. ■

News

Versatile Gerstein leaves a long list of accolades

RON CSILLAG
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Reva Gerstein tallied many firsts in her impressively long career. She was the first child psychologist in the Ontario school system; the first female member of Ontario's Committee on University Affairs (CUA), appointed by then-premier John Robarts in 1962; the first female director of McGraw-Hill Ryerson Publishing, Maritime Life Assurance, Avon and International Nickel (INCO); and the first female chancellor of Western University, a post she held from 1992 to 1996.

A 1980 profile in *The CJN* described her as "a solitary, talented lady in a man's world." Indeed, Gerstein was an early breaker of glass ceilings.

At the time, she said she owed her success to her father, David Appleby, a Polish immigrant and importer who died in 1979.

"He treated me as an equal," she said. "I've never known the feeling of being uncomfortable as a woman."

A psychologist, educator, policy adviser, corporate director and passionate mental health advocate whose expertise was sought out by prime ministers, premiers and mayors, the protean Gerstein died in Toronto on Jan. 6. She was 102.

A member of the Order of Canada and Order of Ontario, Gerstein served as president of the National Council of Jewish Women from 1954 to 1958, and introduced gerontological fellowships, mental health programs and "golden age clubs" across Canada, according to a lengthy death notice that listed her accomplishments.

Gerstein was a member of Holy Blossom Temple for decades, marrying there in 1939. "She was often lauded as the first woman in many spaces, and her family is proud that she made people recognize she was the first Jew in those rooms as well. Our congregational family mourns her passing," said the synagogue's Rabbi Jordan Helfman.

Reva Gerstein COURTESY ALEX DWORKIN CANADIAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

Gerstein taught diagnostic and clinical testing at the University of Toronto and York University. She worked on major provincial educational reports, provided new insights into mental health treatments for youth, ran a youth hostel for transient students and even served on a task force on policing in Ontario.

"She has had a full, professionally satisfying life," *The CJN* stated 40 years ago. And she was far from done.

Born in Toronto on March 27, 1917, Gerstein earned bachelor, master's and doctoral degrees in psychology, all at the University of Toronto. In 1938, she applied to a local hospital for an internship but was turned away because she was Jewish.

"I felt very badly," she recalled, "but those were the rules. I found something else to do. I never banged my head on the wall. I believed that real competence eventually gets through."

During the war years, she taught psychology at the University of Toronto and worked directly with Sir Frederick Banting on the effects of oxygen deprivation on mental abilities for the Royal Canadian Air Force, according to her death notice. She was later hired by the East York-Leaside Board of Health as the first child psychologist in the Ontario school system.

At war's end, squeezed out by men returning to their university jobs, she joined the Canadian Mental Health Association, where she established Mental Health Week in Canada and ran a weekly program on mental health on CBC Radio.

In the ensuing decades, her life was a whirlwind. In 1968, she founded and chaired the campaign to raise funds for the creation of the Hincks Treatment Centre for Adolescents, which is now part of the SickKids Centre for Community Mental Health.

In the late 1970s, she was appointed by then-premier Bill Davis to the revamped Ontario Council on University Affairs. Around the same time, Canada's newly elected prime minister Joe Clark invited Gerstein to be deputy minister of health and welfare. She declined. "I didn't want to live in Ottawa," she explained. "I wanted to be with my family and husband."

A high point for Gerstein came when Toronto Mayor Art Eggleton asked her to chair his Action Task Force on Discharged Psychiatric Patients in Toronto. Her report led to one of Canada's "most profound shifts in mental-health care to a non-medical model that focused on healthy living beyond psychiatric hospitals," noted an obituary published by Western University.

That meant ensuring that people recovering from mental illness had access to homes, social services, employment and dignity. Her work helped shift Canadian mental health care from a medical model to one focused on healthy, community-based living.

When the province opened support facilities for mental illness survivors in 1989, they were named the Gerstein Crisis Centre. With two locations, the centre provides 24-hour counselling, emergency beds and a mobile crisis team.

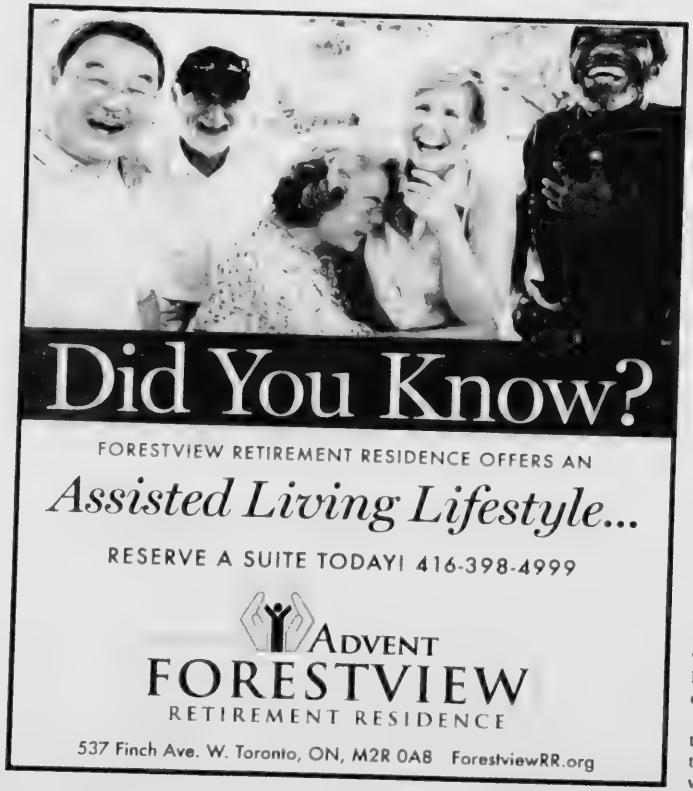
"She spent a lifetime working to give voice to those usually unheard by society," the Gerstein Crisis Centre noted in its online tribute.

For her efforts, she was awarded six honorary doctorates.

Being a female professional with such high visibility may have been a novelty in her day, but she believed more women should shake up the workforce.

"They're showing men they can handle a variety of jobs," she said in 1980, but added, "they aren't equal in pay, and some men still feel threatened by women."

Gerstein was predeceased by her brothers, Irving and Sidney Appleby, and husbands Bertrand Gerstein and David Raitblatt. She is survived by her sons, Irving and Ira, 10 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. ■



Leo Kolber was a pillar of business and politics

JANICE ARNOLD
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Former senator Leo Kolber died in Montreal on Jan. 9, 10 days shy of his 91st birthday.

When he was invested as an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2008, Kolber was cited as having been an outstanding contributor to Canada's business, political and philanthropic scenes for more than 40 years.

A former Liberal Party of Canada national revenue committee chair, Kolber served in the Senate from 1983 to 2004, during which time he was chair of the standing committee on banking, trade and commerce.

He established the Cadillac-Fairview Corporation, one of the largest real estate companies in North America, and was a member of numerous corporate boards over the years.

Kolber was associated, in a volunteer capacity and as a benefactor, with a myriad of social, cultural and health-care organizations and causes, including serving as president of the Jewish General Hospital (JGH) in Montreal from 1997 to 1999.

The hospital lauded Kolber for having taken the helm at a time of "turmoil in the health-care system. In the face of hospital closures and downsizing, he was firm in his defence of the JGH and considered access to high-quality health-care services a non-negotiable issue."

He also held leadership positions with Combined Jewish Appeal and State of Israel Bonds, among other organizations.

Born in Montreal, where his father was a dentist, Ernest Leo Kolber graduated from McGill University's law faculty and was called to the Quebec bar in 1952. It was at McGill in the late 1940s that Kolber met Charles Bronfman and the pair became lifelong friends.

Charles Bronfman's father, Sam, the former CEO of Seagram Company Ltd., a Montreal-based distiller, reportedly fostered that relationship, after recognizing Kolber's keen business acumen. Kolber has called Sam Bronfman his mentor.

In his 1975 book, *The Canadian Establishment*, author Peter C. Newman described how "Sam treated him as a son and Leo worshipped Sam as a father."

For almost 30 years, Kolber was president of CEMP Investments, the holding company of the trusts established by the elder Bronfman for his four children. He was also chair of Claridge Inc., the Bronfmans' private management company.

He held directorships with MGM, Supersol, Cineplex Odeon, the Toronto-Dominion Bank and Seagram, among others.

In 2005, Kolber was appointed chair of the government's Advisory Council on National Security.

Leo and Roni Kolber at the Segal Cancer Centre Gala in 2017.
PHOTO COURTESY SEGAL CANCER CENTRE

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

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Push to get Holocaust education in med schools

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More often than not, doctors are trusted, even revered. But history shows they can easily sink to unspeakable evil.

During the Nazi regime, doctors routinely violated their ancient oath to do no harm by conducting sadistic experiments on concentration camp inmates and murdering the weak and disabled in the cause of perfecting the German *volk*. They willingly, even enthusiastically, did the Third Reich's twisted bidding.

In the years since, painful questions have challenged the profession. How did healers become killers? Or, as a recent issue of the *Israel Journal of Health Policy Research* pondered, "could the Holocaust, one of the greatest evils ever perpetrated on humankind, have occurred without the complicity of physicians, their societies and the scientific community?"

Most importantly, could it happen again?

Those issues were tackled recently by the prestigious medical journal *The Lancet*. In a commentary last summer titled, Medicine and the Holocaust – it's Time to Teach, the publication's editor, Richard Horton, explained that medicine's success in the 1930s "contributed to its hubris and collusion with a racist political regime." He also took notice of the recent rise in nationalism and anti-Semitism.

The profession is now even more powerful than it was then, Horton continued, and by including the Holocaust in the curriculum of health professionals, "medicine could do much to vanquish the evil that is anti-Semitism."

Dr. Frank Sommers

The Lancet article resonated locally. Meeting last November, members of the Ontario Medical Association (OMA) voted unanimously to "endorse and promote the recent call by the editor of *The Lancet* to include the Holocaust in the curriculum of health professionals."

That was music to the ears of Dr. Frank Sommers, a Toronto psychiatrist and child survivor of the Holocaust. When the motion passed, doctors "burst into applause and I was very relieved and gratified," Sommers told *The CJN*.

Sommers, a co-founder of Doctors Against Racism and Anti-Semitism (DARA), said teaching about Holocaust-era medicine in medical schools was an idea he'd entertained for years, but *The Lancet* article provided the impetus for him to take it to the OMA.

The vote followed an impassioned plea from Sommers, who was born in Budapest in 1943, just before the Nazi occupation of the city, and whose immediate family survived by hiding in the basements of bombed-out buildings.

"My larger extended family were shipped, stripped of their human dignity and murdered in the gas chambers and crematoria of Nazi extermination camps, which were planned, produced and directly supervised by German doctors and scientists," Sommers told the OMA meeting.

By passing the motion, he said the OMA would be "adding our voices, resolve and commitment to bring life to the words: Never Again – any time, and place."

Sommers said he's also received support for the idea from the Canadian Medical Association.

Now, "we need to reach out to all medical schools," Sommers told *The CJN*. "Faculty needs to signal to young doctors that this is a very real and serious part of medicine. There was a high level of scientific and medical complicity" in the Holocaust.

As the journal *Academic Medicine* agreed in 2015, the subject "needs to become a mandatory, integral component of 21st-century health professions education, aimed at enlightening health professionals to what went terribly wrong, what can still go wrong and making sure it does not recur."

These lessons, it added, "can serve as powerful vehicles for nurturing students' humanistic qualities, that is, their deep-seated convictions about one's obligations to others, especially others in need."

In Israel, a curriculum module on the Holocaust and medicine became a requirement for all medical students at Bar Ilan University in 2017. The idea is to integrate lessons from the Third Reich into doctors' "professional identities."

In the United States, about 20 of the country's 140 or so medical schools teach about medicine and the Holocaust, and that may mean only one lecture, according to the Houston-based Center for Medicine After the Holocaust.

Whether the subject is taught at any of Canada's 17 medical schools is not tracked, said a spokesperson for the Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada.

However, the University of Toronto's faculty of medicine, where Sommers teaches, has started with baby steps. It is developing a curriculum on physician responsibility and one on religious discrimination that may include subject matter about the Holocaust, according to a spokesperson. The development of the new curriculum only recently began and it's unknown when it will be introduced.

There is a long, disturbing litany of moral failings by doctors during the Nazi years. For one, German doctors and health-care providers joined the Nazi party at a higher rate than any profession, according to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, with 45 per cent of them signing up, compared to seven per cent of teachers. They were rewarded with the jobs of Jewish doctors and professors who were ousted from their posts.

Guided by eugenic theories of race, German physicians, nurses and bioscientists forcibly sterilized as many as 400,000 people and "euthanized" another 200,000 disabled children and adults under the so-called T-4 program.

Perhaps the best-known example is Josef Mengele – the "Angel of Death" – a doctor who decided which arrivals to Auschwitz would live and which would die, and who performed barbaric experiments on prisoners.

Of the 20 physicians tried for war crimes at the post-war doctors' trial in Nuremberg, 16 were found guilty and four were executed.

"I would be quite willing to speak to medical students about all this," Sommers said. ■

CANADIAN ASSOCIATES OF

Shimmy Wenner

We are thrilled to announce the appointment of **Shimmy Wenner** as **Executive Director, CABGU Ontario & Atlantic Canada.** Shimmy has led a successful career defined by leadership in the Jewish community and a passion for Israel and the Jewish people. A graduate of the University of Toronto, Shimmy began working in the Jewish community at B'nai Brith Canada and soon after became director of Camp Moshava, a Jewish overnight camp in Ontario. In 2002 Shimmy joined the Campaign team at UJA Federation of Greater Toronto where he worked for 17 years in a variety of roles of progressive responsibility. He most recently served as the Senior Director of Campaign Operations, Transformation and Analytics, where he helped the organization reach historical fundraising growth and was pivotal in leading the operations of one of North America's largest annual campaigns.

On a personal note, Shimmy has been married to his wife Ayala for 24 years and they have two children, Elyanna and Ami, both in university.

We look forward to Shimmy bringing his dedication, experience and expertise in fundraising, operations and event planning to our CABGU team.

Mitchell Oelbaum
National President

Mark Mendelson
CEO

Eric Beutel, Elliot Kohn, Ralph Shepherd and Michael Spigelman
Co-Presidents, CABGU Ontario

Quebec man charged with incitement

JANICE ARNOLD
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A 38-year-old Quebec man has been charged with inciting hatred and advocating genocide against identifiable groups, including Jews, following his arrest on Jan. 6 at his home in Granby, about 70 kilometres east of Montreal.

Valentin Auclair appeared in court on Jan. 7 in front of Quebec court Judge Serge Champoux, who ordered Auclair to undergo a psychiatric evaluation, which both the prosecution and defence lawyers recommended. Auclair has been in police custody since his arrest.

The two counts of inciting hate and one of advocating genocide stem from posts made by Auclair on social media since July 30.

Auclair's online activity promoting white supremacist views and images over the past couple of years was flagged by Xavier Camus, a CEGEP teacher, who uses the Internet to track Quebec extremists.

He made Auclair's posts public when they became increasingly threatening.

Camus documented Auclair's progression from spreading racist propaganda to glorification of Nazism and Hitler to outright calls for the annihilation of certain minorities and immigrants, whom he called "vermin."

Auclair had been using the Russia-based VKontakte (VK), a social network comparable to Facebook.

Just hours before his arrest, Auclair posted on VK in French, "Our cause is bigger than me. Never am I going to kneel to international Jewry."

According to Camus, some Quebec extremists are eluding the scrutiny of law enforcement by using VK to disseminate content that is banned on mainstream social media.

Auclair himself posted in October that VK "gives us full and entire freedom of expression. Without constraint or bullsh-t."

Besides Jews, Auclair has spoken in the vilest terms about Arabs, Muslims, black people, Asians and Latinos.

Among the numerous screenshots of postings by Auclair that Camus has captured and posted on his blog are the following:

"The concentration camp is the greatest Nazi innovation. That permitted the extermination of a pile of Jews. That is good riddance."

This past November, he hailed Kristallnacht. "That's the day our good Fuehrer acted legitimately to defend against the Jewish cancer that was eating away Germany. That's the beginning of the liberation of Europe from the Jew.

"But alas, after 80 years, we again need crystal nights to purify Europe of international Jewry and ... foreign occupation: immigration."

Profile picture of Valentin Auclair on Russian social media website VKontakte.

Auclair was questioned by local police in early October without being apprehended. Then his posts increasingly urged violence.

On Nov. 4, he referred to an online weapons shop called The Armory with the tout, "if you want nice little toys for hunting Jews, n---ers and *mahomardes*, this is a good site."

By Nov. 17, he spoke of "the hunt" having opened, adding, "This swarm of sub-race has become insupportable."

In December, he continued to propagate what Camus terms "genocidal fantasies" glorifying Hitler, ranting about Zyklon B and "a pile of cadavers," about Jews, black people, Arabs, Asians and Latinos who are "going to bite the dust in 2021," adding, "No animals in our home."

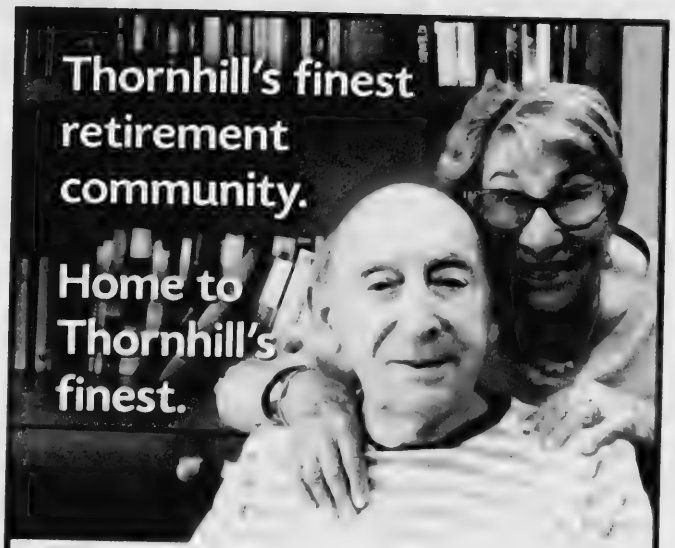
Elsewhere, Auclair referred to Quebec mass murderers Marc Lépine and Alexandre Bissonnette, as well as Norwegian terrorist Anders Breivik, as "saints."

The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) has been monitoring the matter and has been in touch with Granby police, who say Auclair was not previously known to them before their investigation began.

On Jan. 6, the organization stated it is "deeply concerned by the discovery of online posts by a self-proclaimed white supremacist in Granby, Que. We reviewed the posts and found them to promote violence and hatred against Jews, blacks, Muslims, Arabs, Asians, and Latinos."

CIJA Quebec co-chair Rabbi Reuben Poupko further commented, "This incident reminds us, yet again, that the Internet is too often used to spread hate and incite violence, and demands vigorous monitoring. We are grateful to the Granby police for dealing with this individual with the urgency these crimes deserve.

"In the backdrop of a worldwide resurgence of anti-Semitism, and in view of the spate of violent and deadly attacks on Jews and other minorities, there can be no tolerance for inciting anti-Semitism, racism, bigotry and violence." ■



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Alberta Jewish newspapers join forces in merger

MICHAEL FRAIMAN
mfraiman@thecjn.ca

By the end of January, neither the *Edmonton Jewish News* nor the Calgary-based *Jewish Free Press* will exist. Instead, they will have merged into one provincial community newspaper: the *Alberta Jewish News*.

"We've thoroughly enjoyed serving the Jewish community – but it's time to retire," Judy Shapiro and Richard Bronstein, the husband-and-wife team that ran the *Jewish Free Press* for years, wrote in a release published on the new *Alberta Jewish News* website on Jan. 3.

"We are glad to say that there will continue to be a Jewish newspaper in Calgary. We have sold the assets of our business to Deb Shatz and Dan Moser, the mother and son team who publish the *Edmonton Jewish News*."

Moser first heard rumours that Bronstein wanted to sell the paper in early 2019. Tight-knit communities being what they are, Moser learned he went to summer camp with Bronstein's daughter and reached out to them through her with a pitch.

By August, the two camps had formally discussed a merger and, over the next few months, they were able to finalize the deal.

"It had been something that my dad, since he was younger, had always wanted to do – have Jewish newspapers in both communities," said Dan Moser, who runs the Edmonton paper with his mother. His father, who's now retired, formerly helmed five regional newspapers: *Edmonton Jewish News*, *Alberta Native News*, *Western Native News*, *Senior Times* and *Women's Paper*. (Today, only the *Edmonton Jewish News* and *Alberta Native News* still exist.

Moser joined the family business five years ago, transitioning from a career in sports management, and spearheaded the company's new digital presence. He created a website for the *Edmonton Jewish News* and began promoting its content on Facebook, where the two newspapers now have a combined following of around 5,000 people.

He hopes to mimic that success with the company's presence in Calgary. The *Jewish Free Press* didn't have an actively maintained website – something Moser wants to fix as soon as possible. He also plans to

keep on as many writers as possible, while also adding new ones. The *Jewish Free Press* employed no full-time staff aside from its owners.

The paper will continue to be delivered to households free of charge in both cities. Advertisements and periodic holiday greetings, submitted with a $36 donation, will continue to be its primary source of income. Each paper had a circulation of approximately 2,100. However, because Calgary's Jewish population is larger than Edmonton's (8,335 compared to 5,550, according to the 2011 census), Moser is optimistic that they can grow their presence in the bigger market, while helping each community learn from each other.

While readers throughout Alberta will read one combined newspaper most of the time, during the holiday season, the paper will print a distinct edition for each city, catering to local groups and businesses.

"We encourage the Jewish organizations in Calgary to send us photos, send us clippings, send us things that are interesting to them and we'll spread the word as best we can," Moser says. "I envision a world where the organizations are able to build off each other by seeing what each other are doing." ■

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Former senator advised Bronfman family

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

In his 2003 memoir, *Leo: A Life*, Kolber described himself as having been the Bronfman family's consigliere, borrowing a mafia term for a trusted outsider.

Kolber also had a close friendship with Shimon Peres, ever since the future Israeli leader first visited Canada in 1950.

Sam Bronfman's intuition proved correct – Kolber did, indeed, have a genius for making money. He urged the Bronfmans to diversify from liquor into real estate development. When Cadillac-Fairview, which built Toronto's landmark Eaton Centre and Toronto-Dominion Centre, was sold in 1987, Kolber noted that he personally made $100 million, in addition to the $1.2-billion profit for the Bronfmans.

As the federal Liberal party's chief fundraiser, Kolber frequently entertained the political and business elite at his Westmount, Que., home. Kolber developed a personal friendship with former prime minister Pierre Trudeau, with whom he and his wife Sandra often travelled abroad after Trudeau left office.

Sandra Kolber, a poet and film executive, died in 2001. The two were married for 44 years.

Kolber also considered former prime minister Brian Mulroney a good friend and disclosed that he raised $100,000 for his Progressive Conservative party leadership bid in 1983.

Through his MGM board membership, Kolber cultivated relationships with many Hollywood stars and counted Danny Kaye and Cary Grant as friends. Frank Sinatra was once a guest at his home.

Despite flying in such rarefied circles, Kolber did not, it seems, take himself too seriously. In his book, he acknowledges what was long surmised by others – that he was Mordecai Richler's inspiration for Harvey Schwartz, the social-climbing "relentless ass-kisser" and "paranoid hypochondriac" in *Solomon Gursky Was Here*, a novel that echoes the Bronfmans' rise to fortune.

Kolber attributed his drive to seeing his middle-aged father unable to make a living for the last two years of his life, after suffering from a heart attack.

Kolber is survived by his second wife, Roni, and children, Lynne and Jonathan. ■

Thousands mark the end of the daf yomi cycle

ALEX ROSE

Around 3,600 Jews filled the Metro Toronto Convention Centre on Jan. 5, to mark the conclusion of the seven-and-a-half-year *daf yomi* reading cycle, in which participants study a page of the Talmud every day. They were joined by hundreds of thousands of their peers in similar celebrations around the world.

Rabbi Tzvi Sytner of Toronto's Village Shul, who served as MC of the 13th Siyum HaShas, shared a story of a Holocaust survivor, "Mr. Berkowitz," whose family he knew. Berkowitz survived Auschwitz-Birkenau and was liberated from Dachau, but it was a single moment shortly after his liberation that demoralized him.

He was walking down the street when he saw two children eating popcorn out of a paper cone. Upon closer inspection, he realized the paper cone was in fact a page of the Gemara. Berkowitz tracked down the stand where the kids had purchased the popcorn and saw the vendor standing there with a Talmud beside him. With each new sale, the vendor would rip off the top page, roll it up into a cone and fill it with popcorn.

The 13th Siyum HaShas at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre in Toronto on Jan. 5.

According to Rabbi Sytner, Berkowitz was heartbroken to see his beloved text used to hold handfuls of greasy popcorn. The Gemara was being defiled so thoughtlessly – not out of hatred, but out of convenience – and it broke his heart.

Rabbi Sytner hoped that Berkowitz was watching the gathering in Toronto and other similar ones around the world. What a contrast it represented from the days when the sacred text was used as a food receptacle, and what a tribute it is to the will of the Jewish people who, as Rabbi Sytner said, are inscribing the text on their hearts.

"It's a simcha, it's an accomplishment," said Mordechai Plopper, who was at the Siyum HaShas celebrating his third completion of the *daf yomi* cycle. He said he enjoys the process of waking up early and going to shul every day to study the Talmud, but he commits to the process for more than just enjoyment.

"It's an integral part of my day, the beginning of my day, and if I don't have that, I feel that something's lacking," he said. "I wish I would learn a lot more than I can, but it's a must."

Daf yomi was created by Rabbi Meir Shapiro in 1923 to align the Talmud studies of Jews around the world. Similar to how every congregation reads the same Torah portion every Shabbat, every Talmud study group reads the same page every day.

No matter where you travel to, no matter where a Jew would find themselves, as long as there is a Jewish community, there he would find like-minded individuals that are studying the exact same page that he's studying," said Menachem Brown, one of the organizers of the Toronto event.

"In the current chapter of *klal Yisra'el*'s march through history, there are few moments which capture our hearts like a Siyum HaShas of *daf yomi*," read a letter from the organizing committee members in the event's program. "It is a moment of *achdus* and joy, a pure celebration of *kavod HaTorah* together with all facets of our esteemed community. It is a rare moment where we share our unreserved love of our holy Torah with all Torah learners, from all different backgrounds, at any level. We must capture this moment as it has captured us." ■

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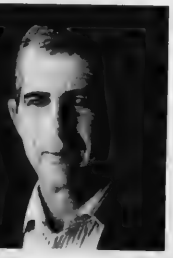

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Jewish and indigenous hockey players team up

SUSAN MINUK
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

It's no secret that sports can promote positive values, and hockey is no exception. The Manitoulin Panthers, an indigenous hockey team from Manitoulin Island, on Lake Huron, recently hosted the Avenue Road Ducks, a Jewish hockey team from Toronto.

The event took place on Dec. 15 and 16 in Little Current, Ont., as part of the annual Chevrolet Good Deeds Cup, which is designed to inspire young Canadians to do good by transforming the positive values learned through hockey into good deeds.

A first for youth hockey in Canada, the Jewish-indigenous cultural exchange was designed to promote inclusion, tolerance and education, and demonstrate how hockey can bridge today's cultural divides.

"The Chevrolet Good Deed's Cup is a Canada-wide competition for peewee hockey teams (ages 11 and 12) that do a good deed in their community," said Alan Schwartz, a former hockey coach who has a child who plays for the Ducks.

For their good deed, the two teams held a joint food drive for Manitoulin Family Resources. The grand total raised was $6,488. In Toronto, the Ducks created a GoFundMe page and contributed $1,400, along with a van filled with non-perishable food items.

"Having the Ducks come out and support the programs here, and watching that collaboration between the teams working together for the benefit of people that they don't even know because they know the need is there, is so positive," said Marnie Hall, the executive director of Manitoulin Family Resources.

Norman Assiniwe of the Wikwemikong First Nations, centre, shows a beaver pelt to Avenue Road Ducks players. [illegible]

Nine of the 17-member Ducks team travelled to Manitoulin Island. On the bus ride, they educated coaches, parents and teammates about First Nations traditions and culture.

"The greatest compliment we could give our hosts was to show them that we had taken some time to learn a little about their lives," said Schwartz. "The idea was to have the kids become the teachers and give us lessons."

Dov Paskowitz, who plays for the Ducks, informed the group about the residential school system. "Over 150,000 children were taken from their families. They were sent away to residential schools," said Paskowitz. "The children were forbidden to speak their language and practice their culture."

Eli Rewega, another Ducks player, discussed Jewish history in the north.

"Most of the Jews in northern Ontario came in the early 1900s. One hundred twenty-five Russian Jewish families decided to start a Jewish community near New Liskeard and Timmins. They had a mikveh, school, synagogue and cemetery and a small downtown," Rewega explained.

"Joseph Gold was an activist in Manitoulin Island. Joseph was a devoted friend of First Nations people, committed to acknowledging the abuse carried out in the residential school system and helping to heal the scars of colonization. He worked as a counsellor for the First Nations of Temiskaming. His obituary in the Manitoulin newspaper said that he had a commitment to social change, love of nature, the northern landscape and animals. He brought *tikun olam*, helping the world, to Manitoulin, and so are we."

The kids corresponded through social media for a month prior to meeting. "We are the first Jews many of these people have ever met. From exchanging information about why our boys were wearing a kippah, to the discovery of the indigenous traditions, they bonded seamlessly," said Schwartz.

Scot Hughson, the coach of the Manitoulin Panthers, added that, "The way our players have worked together with the Ducks is incredible to be part of. I can say with confidence that there have been friendships created that will last a lifetime."

The Ducks participated in a skinning demonstration, a trapping tour, a presentation on Wampum belts and were educated about the way many indigenous people live off the land.

The Panthers cooked a traditional Manitoulin meal, consisting of freshly caught fish, chilies and stews made with venison, deer and moose.

"Most of our players are kosher," said Schwartz. "The parent group brought up their own pans and cooked the trout."

The Panthers, many of whom are from the Wikwemikong First Nations Reserve, experienced a Shabbat dinner at Clanton Park Synagogue in Toronto on Jan. 10. ■

Bowler looks forward to competing in Special Olympics

ILANA BELFER
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

When Kenneth (Kenny) Freeman started bowling, he said his biggest challenge was making friends. Twenty years later, with a community of close-knit coaches and teammates to cheer him on, he's ready to take on his next challenge: competing at the Special Olympics Canada Winter Games in Thunder Bay, Ont., in February.

"At first, I never thought I was able to get to provincials, and then I heard from my mom that my team had made it through to nationals," said Freeman. "I was like overly excited … I told my brother first 'cause I couldn't wait. I had to take out my happiness."

Freeman, 39, lives with Down syndrome. He moved into his own apartment in his early 20s with the support of Reena, a Jewish non-profit that provides semi-independent housing to special needs people in the Greater Toronto Area, and was introduced to bowling thanks to a Reena program offered in partnership with Special Olympics Ontario. Before long, he was bowling twice a week – one day with Reena and one day with another group.

Two years ago, with decades of practice under his belt, coaches began taking notice of Freeman's increasing scores, which indicated he could qualify for the provincial Special Olympics. They encouraged him to participate in the qualifier.

Margaret French was one such coach. She leads the Richmond Hill Strikers, a team Freeman joined in 2018. French said that the benefits of bowling are multifaceted, particularly for special needs bowlers. "Socially, some of them have improved immensely through these programs," she said.

Freeman is a case in point. When telling the story of his bowling career, he speaks most frequently about the people he's met – though he doesn't forget to mention his medals, either. After qualifying, Freeman won bronze in individual competition and gold in team play at the 2019 provincial championships.

Kenneth Freeman

"When I got the last medal, I go up to my mom and I'm like, 'here mom, look what I got,' and it was like she had gone totally blank," said Freeman. He noted that his victories are meaningful not only to him, but also to his family, who bowl together every year at the Striking for Reena fundraiser.

As Freeman trains for the 2020 Special Olympics Canada Winter Games – which involves weekend-long training camps, healthy eating and workouts three times a week – his mom, Jo-Anne Ross-Freeman, said she remembers "years of sweat and tears." She has had to fight for Freeman to be integrated into mainstream programs and schools while he was growing up. In her eyes, the hard work paid off.

"To see how far he's come since then is unbelievable. He's a regular guy – he's got a girlfriend, he's got a job, he lives on his own with support, he goes to the bank, he does his shopping, he does his cooking – he's just awesome!"

But from Feb. 25 to 29, Freeman won't just be a regular guy – he'll be an Olympian. ■

To help sponsor Kenneth Freeman, visit team.specialolympicsontario.com/2019/09/04/kenneth-freeman.

INTERNATIONAL

Peace plan may be rolled out soon, U.S. official says

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF
JERUSALEM

A top White House official has said U.S. President Donald Trump's administration will not necessarily wait until after Israel's March 2 elections to release its long-awaited peace plan.

The launch of the so-called "deal of the century" has been delayed repeatedly by the political uncertainty in Israel, which will hold an unprecedented third vote in the span of a single year after two indecisive elections.

"I don't think it necessarily depends on the elections," White House national security adviser Robert O'Brien told the Axios website in comments published late Sunday. "They will have had three elections in a row, we'll have to see."

"The [US] president is looking for a solution on the Israeli-Palestinian front that is durable, is long-lasting, and we're not timing anything we do based on the domestic politics, either the Palestinians or the Israelis," O'Brien said.

The comments dovetail with recent reports in Israel that the unveiling could happen in the next few weeks.

The first part of the proposal was presented last summer during the so-called Peace to Prosperity workshop in Manama, Bahrain. It dealt exclusively with financial incentives for the Palestinians in case a peace plan was concluded. The publication of the other part, which deals with the political dimensions of a proposed solution, was repeatedly delayed due to the lack of a full-fledged elected government in Jerusalem.

U.S. President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem in 2017. Trump is said to be looking for a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian situation. JINIPIX PHOT

Reports quoting both Israeli and American officials suggested last week that the Trump administration could push ahead with the announcement. The White House was said to have grown increasingly frustrated as U.S. elections draw near, a period during which any major foreign policy move could be seen as electioneering.

Avi Berkowitz, the U.S. administration's new envoy to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, came to Israel last week for a series of meetings with senior officials, sources in Jerusalem and Washington said. It was Berkowitz's first trip to the region since replacing Jason Greenblatt in the role.

He met Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem and Blue and White party Leader Benny Gantz, Netanyahu's main challenger in the coming March election, though neither of the meetings was confirmed on the record by either side.

Unnamed Israeli officials told Channel 13 last week that Berkowitz's visit had been part of the preparations for a possible launch of the plan soon, discussing the matter with both Netanyahu and Gantz.

A separate report by the *Haaretz* daily last week said there was a "real debate within the White House over whether the plan should be released in the next few weeks.

That report said Gantz had warned Berkowitz that unveiling the plan before the election would be "blatant intervention by Trump in Israel's democratic process" comments he also repeated publicly in a media briefing last Wednesday, Jan. 8.

But O'Brien seemed to dismiss that remark, saying it would not affect the timing of the peace plan's release.

"We're not focused on the Israeli election calendar or when the Palestinians end up having an election," he said. ■

Raphael Ahren contributed to this report. Timesofisrael.com

Israeli intel helped U.S. with Soleimani killing, NBC report shows

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF
JERUSALEM

Israel helped the United States in the operation that resulted in the killing of Qassem Soleimani, the powerful head of Iran's elite Quds Force, a U.S. report said last weekend.

According to an NBC News report late last Friday, the Jewish state was involved in the Jan. 3 operation, handing the Americans key intelligence details.

The information helped confirm intelligence provided by informants at a Syrian airport that Soleimani had been on a nighttime flight from Damascus to Baghdad, the report said, quoting two sources with direct knowledge of the operation and other U.S .officials briefed on it.

After his plane landed, it was a simple matter of using drones to track him entering a car, which was later targeted with four missiles.

Israeli media reported the day after the strike that U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had briefed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ahead of time about the U.S. plans to kill Soleimani.

Pompeo phoned Netanyahu on Jan. 1, ostensibly to thank him for Israel's support in efforts to combat Iran and after the attack on the U.S. Embassy in Iraq.

Before departing for Athens the following morning, Netanyahu alluded to "very, very dramatic things" happening in the region.

"We know that our region is stormy; very, very dramatic things are happening in it. We are alert and are monitoring the situation. We are in continuous contact with our great friend the U.S., including my conversation yesterday afternoon," he told reporters at Ben Gurion International Airport.

Hours later, Soleimani and several top officials from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps were killed in the airstrike at Baghdad's international airport, along with an Iranian-backed Iraqi militia commander.

Netanyahu had been the only non-U.S. leader who appeared in the know about the planned operation beforehand, the *New York Times* reported Saturday.

The Reuters news agency reported on Jan. 9 that a series of Syrian and Iraqi informants are suspected of providing the U.S. with the information that led to Soleimani's killing.

The suspected informants — two security employees at Baghdad airport and two workers in private Syrian airline Cham Wings — gave the intelligence about Soleimani's secret flight from Damascus to Baghdad, the report said, quoting security officials, Baghdad airport employees and Cham Wings employees.

Tensions between Tehran and Washington have risen significantly since the U.S. carried out the airstrike that killed Soleimani. In the wake of the killing, the Iraqi parliament voted to press the government to expel U.S. troops from the country and Iran announced that it will no longer abide by any of the limits of its 2015 nuclear deal.

Last week, a former leader of Iran's Revolutionary Guards said that the cities of Tel Aviv and Haifa could be targeted to avenge Soleimani after previously alleging that Israel leaked information about Soleimani's whereabouts to U.S. forces.

The U.S. launched the airstrike that killed the Iranian general after a US defence contractor was killed in a rocket attack in northern Iraq, which was in turn a retaliation for a U.S. airstrike which killed Iranian-backed militants in Syria and Iraq. ■

PM's immunity debate gets off to a rocky start

RAOUL WOOTLIFF
JERUSALEM

A bid to discuss, and likely reject, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's request for immunity from prosecution got off to a turbulent start last Monday, as lawmakers bickered loudly and Likud members staged a protest walkout from the Knesset's Arrangements Committee meeting.

Meeting the morning after the Knesset legal adviser released a ruling saying the Knesset could not block the formation of a House Committee — which will deal with the immunity request — Likud MKs nevertheless claimed that Blue and White MK Avi Nissenkorn, the committee chairman, did not have appropriate permission to convene the Arrangements Committee, which is tasked with setting up and staffing the House panel.

The meeting was called to approve Knesset legal adviser Eyal Yinon's ruling limiting the Knesset speaker's powers to block meetings. But playing a game of parliamentary chicken and egg, Likud MKs claimed that only Knesset Speaker Yuli Edelstein could give permission for such a meeting to approve the fact that he does not have that power, and since he had not done so in writing, the meeting had no legal standing.

The crux of Yinon's ruling was that Edelstein did not have the right to prevent the Knesset plenum from forming a House Committee, which is usually not convened in a transitional government. As Knesset speaker, Edelstein must okay any meeting of Nissenkorn's Arrangements Committee.

The panel eventually voted 16-1 to overturn a previous decision of the Arrangements Committee on Dec.15 reserving the right of OK'ing meetings to the Knesset speaker, setting into motion a process that may eventually end with Netanyahu on the stand.

The Arrangements Committee deals with procedural parliamentary issues, and the dry procedural vote Monday means lawmakers can now convene a House Committee to debate and vote on Netanyahu's immunity request in the coming weeks, perhaps even days, long before election day on March 2.

Likud sources have said they will try to delay the process by tying it up in court and with other challenges, hoping to push it past March 2, when a new Knesset will be voted in.

Nissenkorn, who opened the debate by saying that a second meeting would take place at 2:30 p.m. "to debate forming a Knesset committee," claimed he did in fact have permission from the Knesset speaker.

Asked by the *Times of Israel* if he had given permission or not, Edelstein's office was cagey, referring queries about the document granting permission to the committee and refusing to give a simple yes or no answer.

During the meeting, Nissenkorn was repeatedly interrupted by Likud MKs, and he eventually booted MK Miki Zohar, chief among the interrupters from the debate.

Likud MK Miki Zohar interrupts debate in the Knesset on Jan. 13. HADAS PARUSH/FLASH90

When he returned, Zohar repeated his claims that the committee had no right to be meeting without written permission from the Knesset chairman, eventually standing up and leading the rest of the Likud MKs from the room after claiming that Blue and White were turning the Knesset into "an anti-Bibi circus."

Likud's Shlomo Karai remained behind and was the sole vote against overturning Edelstein's powers.

"We will conduct discussions on immunity in a fair, pertinent and effective manner," Nissenkorn said.

MKs from Avigdor Liberman's Yisrael Beytenu party voted in favour of the motion.

Yinon's ruling paved the way for legislators to consider — and, with the current balance of power, almost certainly reject — Netanyahu's request to receive immunity from the indictment he faces in the three criminal cases against him.

Netanyahu had hoped to stall the immunity process until after election day. Blue and White party is hoping that the committee will debate and reject Netanyahu's request within three weeks, with time to spare before the election.

Once created, the House Committee will also field an unrelated immunity request by Likud MK Haim Katz, who also faces graft charges.

Yinon had already ruled that — even though Israel is currently governed by a transition government, there is no legal impediment to the formation of the House Committee.

The prime minister and his supporters were arguing that the House Committee should not be formed because the Israeli government is in transition, and also because there is insufficient time before the elections for the committee to properly weigh the immunity requests.

They also repeated the claims that Yinon was in conflict of interest due to his wife being a senior member of the state prosecution team which formed the indictments against the prime minister.

Netanyahu, in November, became the first sitting prime minister with charges against him when Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit announced he would indict the prime minister for bribery, fraud, and breach of trust. Netanyahu denies the charges. ■

Times of Israel / Timesofisrael.com

Netanyahu backs Iranians demonstrating in Tehran

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF
JERUSALEM

Israel's Prime Minster Benjamin Netanyahu last Sunday praised Iranian protesters demonstrating against the regime after Tehran admitted shooting down an airliner by mistake, killing all 176 people aboard, including 57 Canadians.

"I note the courage of the Iranian people who are again demonstrating in the streets against this regime. They deserve freedom, liberty and the ability to live in security and peace, all of which the regime denies them," he said in Hebrew comments at the start of the weekly cabinet meeting.

In English, he added, "Iran lied. Just as they lied about their secret nuclear program, they are lying now about the downing of the Ukrainian aircraft. They knew from the start that they had downed it. They knew that it was an unintentional downing, but they lied intentionally. They deceived the entire world.

"This is completely contrary to how a civilized country should act and we send our condolences to the victims of Iran's deception and negligence," Netanyahu said.

Iranians expressed horror after the head of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Aerospace division said his unit had shot down the airliner on Jan.8 after mistaking it for a cruise missile. The admission followed three days of Iranian officials vociferously denied shooting down the jet, despite mounting evidence.

In response, Iranians in Tehran took to the streets last Saturday night to rally against the regime. Protests were also reported in other areas. On Sunday, Iran deployed riot police in the capital expecting possible further protests.

Videos posted to social media showed police firing tear gas at demonstrators chanting against the regime and calling for the resignation of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei and the prosecution of those behind the downing of the jet.

Calls included "Death to the dictator," "Shame on you Khamenei, leave the country," "Death to the liars," and "Shame on the Revolutionary Guards, let the country go."

Video also showed a crowd of several hundred university students refusing to trample on large U.S. and Israeli flags that had been laid down in the path of the march. Those that did walk on the flags were chastised by other protesters, the *Haaretz* daily newspaper reported. The video did not identify which university was involved.

"They are lying that our enemy is America; our enemy is right here," chanted some protesters in Tehran, according to a report from the Reuters news agency.

Netanyahu's comments came hours after U.S. President Donald Trump told Iranian protesters that he supported them and warned the regime against cracking down on the demonstrations.

"The government of Iran must allow human rights groups to monitor and report facts from the ground on the ongoing protests by the Iranian people," Trump tweeted in English and Farsi.

"There can not be another massacre of peaceful protesters, nor an Internet shutdown. The world is watching," Trump added, referring to an Internet blackout that blanketed the country during widespread protests in November.

In addition to his comments supporting the protesters, Netanyahu reiterated praise of Trump after the White House announced a new wave of sanctions on Iran following the missile strikes by the Islamic Republic on U.S. bases that came in retaliation for the U.S. drone strike killing Revolutionary Guard general Qassem Soleimani, Iran's most powerful military commander. ■

Times of Israel / Timesofisrael.com

Moscow's star is shining brightly in the Middle East

KSENIA SVETLOVA
MOSCOW

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, left, and Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow, in May, 2018. AMOS BEN GERSHOM/GPO

When the news spread about the targeted killing of Iranian "dark knight" Qassem Soleimani by the Trump administration, Russia was quick to denounce the United States' "risky and dangerous" policy in the region. Just a few days later, President Vladimir Putin paid a surprise visit to Syria. Casually strolling the streets of Damascus with Syrian President Bashar Assad, he was making a clear statement: Russia's grip on Syria remains strong, and the dramatic events taking place in Iraq will not weaken Russia's influence in the region.

The Kremlin may indeed be concerned about long-term fallout from the killing, as it has nothing to gain from a war between the U.S. and Iran. However, the current situation does present its own set of benefits. As Russia and Iran jostle in Syria over the country's future, Putin will probably try to take advantage of the vacuum left by the Iranian mastermind's death to promote his own policies.

The past decade has seen Russia regain the prominence it once enjoyed in the Middle East, further allowing it to both change and set new rules of play in the region.

But this wasn't always the case.

In the early 2000s, Russia was perceived as a weak nation, one that seriously lacked the international clout to influence the Middle East, let alone influence the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

But the dramatic events sweeping through the Middle East — the rise of radical Islam and the "crusade" waged against it by the United States, the endless war in Iraq, the change in the balance of power in the Persian Gulf, as well as waning American influence and growing animosity toward Washington — created a new reality.

The implications of these events were significant and many in the Middle East expressed an intense longing for the bipolar world order in which Russia once played a prominent role. This sentimental feeling was fueled by Putin's image as a strong leader able to push back against the pressure exerted by the U.S. in the international arena.

By 2002, Russia joined the United States, European Union, and the United Nations to form the Quartet — a diplomatic mission aspiring to mediate the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. In 2005, Moscow announced plans to convene an international summit dedicated to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but those plans never materialized.

In 2006, after the Hamas terror organization won the Palestinian elections — and just before it seized control of the Gaza Strip from rival Fatah in a military coup the following year — Russia invited Hamas leaders to a visit in Moscow. The Kremlin does consider the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization — but Hamas, which splintered from it, is seen as a legitimate actor in the diplomatic theatre.

This policy of maintaining close ties with all parties in the region, regardless of their designation, has characterized Russian operations in the region throughout the decade.

In December 2010, the self-immolation of a desperate Tunisian street vendor sparked a firestorm that swept through the entire Middle East, rattling it to its core in a series of revolutions now known as the Arab Spring.

The ouster of longtime Tunisian president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali led to similar uprisings in Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Yemen, and Syria. The United States backed the protesters demanding reforms and democracy in their countries, while Russia called for the preservation of the "legitimate" governments in these countries.

Russian experts had often warned of the danger of Islamization in the region and the negative consequences such a process would have on the Caucasian Muslim republics.

These Russian experts further compared then-U.S. president Barack Obama's conduct at the time of the Arab Spring to the actions taken by President Jimmy Carter against Iran in 1979. Carter and Obama both, the experts argued, believed in the democratic myth, which is irrelevant to the Middle East, rather than cling to the solid foundations provided by the "soft" authoritarian regimes in Egypt and the other countries in the region.

Not surprisingly, Russia has always found common ground with Arab autocrats. The United States has also maintained very close ties with them, but in Russia's case, these rulers could be sure that, wary of the implications of the Arab Spring and the changes it heralded, Moscow had no interest in supporting the democratic aspirations of the protesters in these countries.

The regional reality proved Russia was right to be concerned.

It was at this critical juncture for Russia that the Kremlin decided to back the West's decision to bomb the strongholds of Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi — a longtime Moscow ally.

On Oct. 20, 2011, Gadhafi was captured by insurgents and brutally executed. Russia blamed the West and NATO for the chaos that ensued. Later on, when it came to dealing with the uprising in Syria — another longtime ally of Russia — Moscow took a far more adamant stance.

Russia, which enjoys veto power at the UN Security Council, used it to block any resolution condemning Assad's ruthless tactics against the rebels trying to unseat him. The Kremlin continued to arm Syrian forces, and in September 2015, Russia deployed troops on Syrian soil, effectively joining Iran's efforts to ensure the survival of Assad's regime.

The fact that Russia decided to lend Assad such massive support came as little surprise to Israeli military intelligence, which was monitoring Russia's growing involvement in Syria closely in the year prior to the deployment of Russian troops in the war-torn country.

Russia feared the collapse of Assad's regime, which would have undoubtedly shifted the balance of power in the region, and all the signs indicated that it planned to intervene militarily in Assad's favour.

Putin had three main motives for stepping into the Syrian quagmire: Preventing chaos and Islamic terrorism from reaching Russia's borders; maintaining access to the Port of Tartus, the only Russian naval facility in the entire Mediterranean; and, of course, increasing its geopolitical influence in Middle East with the hopes that it would be able to convert its achievements in Syria to other places, such as Ukraine.

Russian forces in Syria operate strategically and brutally, without actually putting boots on the ground, and all with one ultimate goal — stabilizing Assad's regime and ensuring Syria's territorial integrity.

And then, of course, there's Israel. Jerusalem and Moscow have been on something of a diplomatic honeymoon in recent years. This includes increased commerce and trade, regular visits by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to Moscow and Sochi, and close co-operation regarding continued Israeli military activity in Syrian skies.

The conflict-prevention headquarters Israel and Russia established four years ago have proven highly effective. However, the Sept. 17, 2018 downing of a Russian cargo plane by Syrian air defences countering an Israeli strike sparked a serious diplomatic crisis. The Russian Defence Ministry publicly and blatantly blamed Israel for using the Russian plane as a shield, a charge that Israel denies. The incident left 21 Russian crewmen dead.

The Kremlin's response was swift and decisive: It deployed its advanced S-300 air defence systems in Syria after having refrained from doing so for years at Israel's request.

Israel and Russia also remain divided on the issue of Iran. Israel has vowed to combat any Iranian military presence in Syria, and while Jerusalem had hoped Moscow would help keep the Islamic republic's forces out of Syria, that has not happened.

Russia has the power to completely prevent Israel from targeting Iranian assets in Syria. Putin has turned a blind eye to Israel's activities, for the most part, but the question remains — what will happen when he decides, for whatever reason, that the Israeli attacks in Syria are no longer convenient, most likely because they irk Iran and cast aspersions on Russia's technological capabilities. This is only a theoretical question at the moment, but it hangs in the air nonetheless, and it is plain to see that Israel has reduced its military activity in Syria.

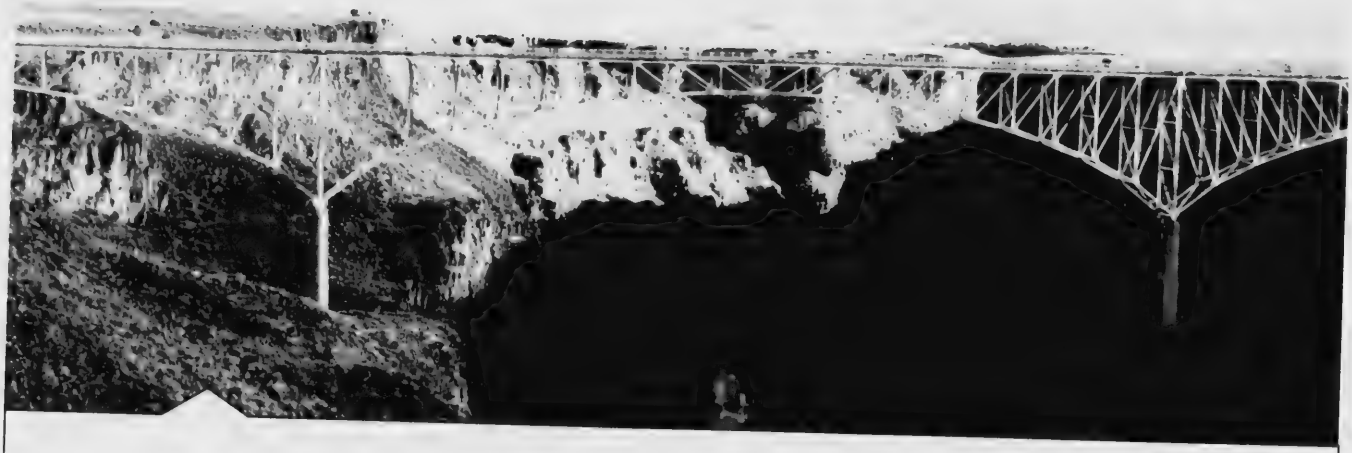
Russia is expected to continue increasing its presence — and influence — in the Middle East over the next decade. The U.S. may keep contributing to this trend, although it is hard to chalk Russian activity in the region solely up to the change in the U.S.'s Middle East policy.

Russia has always considered the Middle East a part of its own backyard. It knows the region well and is accustomed to operating across it.

Under these circumstances, Israel will have to navigate the turbulent waters of the region in a reality in which Russia is becoming stronger and more influential, while the U.S. — Israel's only strategic ally — minimizes its presence, gradually abandoning the Middle East, which has become less essential to its foreign policy. ■

Times of Israel / Timesofisrael.com

Jewish Life



The Rio Grande Gorge Bridge in Taos.

The remote Jews of Taos, N.M.

SANDY BORNSTEIN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Taos, N.M., sits in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains and is within easy driving distance of Santa Fe. While indigenous people have lived outside of Taos for over 1,000 years, few settlers called Taos home until the Taos Society of Artists was established in 1915, just three years after New Mexico achieved statehood. The town's natural surroundings continue to attract artists to this day. Similar to nearby Santa Fe, art stores and small museums are ubiquitous in Taos. And winter tourism increased in the 1950s with the opening of Taos Ski Valley.

A few Jewish immigrants found their way to Taos. And in the 19th and 20th centuries, some started their American business careers in other New Mexico towns and subsequently added businesses in Taos.

Alexander Gusdorf and his half-brother Gerson, for example, owned a number of notable Taos businesses, including a general store and the Don Fernando Hotel, which promoted the work of the Taos Society of Artists until the structure burned down. Alexander Gusdorf was the founder and president of the First State Bank of Taos. After his death in 1923, his wife, Bertha Gusdorf, became one of the first female bank presidents in New Mexico.

At the Taos Jewish Center, Jews from diverse backgrounds come together in a rented storefront space. Lay leadership fuels the day-to-day running of the community, and Rabbi Judith HaLevy, the former rabbi of the Malibu Jewish Center and Synagogue, is their part-time rabbi.

For Rabbi HaLevy, "Spiritual places offer an important dimension to the Jewish experience. While they often attract Jews running away from Judaism, these places frequently reawaken core elements of Judaism lying dormant for years."

She shared the community's practice of gathering near the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge, located 13 kilometres northwest of Taos, on the second day of Rosh Hashanah.

Community support led to the establishment of New Mexico's only free-standing Jewish cemetery. On the outskirts of Taos, local Jews find their final resting place in an open field with spectacular views of the surrounding countryside.

Chabad has had a presence in Taos since 2008. With a brother in Albuquerque, Rabbi Eli Kaminetzky, a former New Yorker, can remain connected to family while living far removed from his traditional Orthodox community. With his spiritual priority focused on reaching out to his community, he actively engages with Jews within an hour's drive of the local Chabad House.

While in Taos, we explored the Native American culture and became acquainted with local history by visiting the Taos Art Museum at Fechin House and the Couse-Sharpe Historic Site. At the Taos Pueblo, local Native-American college students volunteer their time to introduce visitors to their history and culture.

Their history includes confrontations with nomadic Native American tribes, the Spanish and the United States Army. A guided walking tour through the pueblo reveals centuries-old traditions handed down from generation to generation.

A tribal government oversees more than 48,500 hectares of land surrounding this indigenous community. These culturally resilient people were the first tribe to successfully petition the U.S. government to have their homeland returned. Former president Richard Nixon returned the Blue Lake region to the Puebloan people in 1970.

For lunch, we dined at El Gamal. Elad Greenvald, an Israeli, came to Taos with a friend about 20 years ago and then returned with his wife in 2008. For more than a decade, Greenvald has considered Taos his home.

El Gamal is the only vegetarian restaurant in downtown Taos. The dishes were inspired by Greenvald's family recipes. His maternal grandparents were Chicago Zionists who made aliyah in the 1950s, and his paternal grandparents were eastern European Jews who also made Israel their home. El Gamal's falafel was on par with the falafel we've tasted in Israel.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

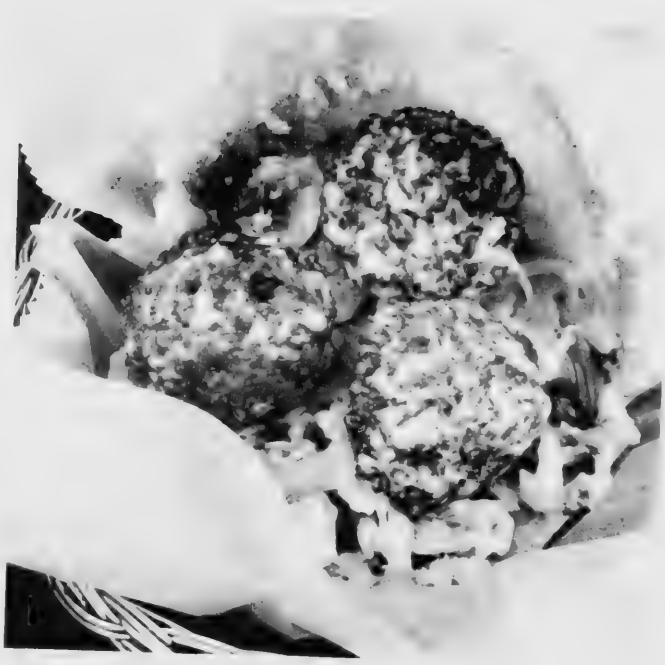
Winter ski enthusiasts may be intrigued by the Jewish connection to the nearby Taos Ski Valley resort. Ernie Blake (born Ernst Hermann Bloch), a German Jew who was raised in Switzerland and later immigrated to the United States, was the owner and founder of the ski resort. As a second lieutenant in the United States Army, he used his native German language skills to interrogate approximately 200 German prisoners, including infamous Nazis such as Hermann Goering and Albert Speer, during and after the Second World War.

He learned about New Mexico from one of his relatives, Salomon Spiegelberg Blake discovered the site where he started Taos Ski Valley while flying his own plane over northern New Mexico. He, along with his wife, Rhoda Limburg Blake, opened the mountain for skiers in 1955. Four of the ski runs – Stauffenberg, Oster, Tresckow and Fabian – were named after the German officers who tried to assassinate Hitler in 1944. The Blake family sold the ski resort in 2013.

At the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge National Monument, we followed the path running along the 250-metre gorge, revealing layers of volcanic basalt flows and ash. In 2013, the Obama administration established the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument with 97,000 hectares of protected land adjacent to the Rio Grande near Taos. Several trails in varying lengths and difficulty are available to hikers.

While taking pictures of the surrounding landscape and the seventh-highest bridge in the United States, we could appreciate Rabbi HaLevy's spiritual connection to this national monument. ■

Sandy Bornstein is an award-winning Colorado-based travel writer and author. The Waite Company arranged her complimentary stay at the Historic Inn of Taos and provided complimentary tickets to local attractions.



A falafel serving at El Gamal, owned by an Israeli.

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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
JANUARY 16, 2020

A microcosm of anti-Zionism on campus

ARI BLAFF
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

The word "social justice" meant little to the broader public a decade ago, but today, it permeates modern culture and has become synonymous with college campuses, progressivism and activism.

For detractors, YouTube wormholes abound with SJW (social justice warrior) compilations, and articles deride the rise of "woke" culture and its potential silencing effects on campuses.

However, according to two academics, Mira Sucharov and Aaron Tapper, the academic discipline of social justice can have a positive political impact. By emphasizing concepts such as rights, justice and oppression at the forefront, Sucharov and Tapper write in their latest book *Social Justice and Israel/Palestine*, it can empower us to "understand ways to end the suffering and injustice that plague those living in Israel/Palestine and beyond."

The book aims to provide a more nuanced, and refreshing, approach to those engaged in the seemingly irreconcilable debates on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Striving to incorporate a diverse spectrum of contributors, Sucharov and Tapper divided *Social Justice and Israel/Palestine* into two halves, devoted to exploring the "foundational" and "contemporary" debates of the conflict.

Although the intentions of the book were respectable, at times, its execution falls short. As one can divine from topics including "settler colonialism," "apartheid," "BDS" and "intersectional alliances," *Social Justice and Israel/Palestine* is thematically skewed towards the Palestinian perspective. This is not to question the scrupulousness of the editors or contributors, but merely a reflection of the underlying scholarship today on campuses: such fields are generally anchored, or more sympathetic, to one side of the equation.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the book is the intellectual dominance of the Palestinian perspective. Any politically conscious student on a North American campus today will be familiar with the terminology prevalent throughout *Social Justice and Israel/Palestine*, which puts advocates of Israel on a defensive footing. Apartheid is not raised in the context of the Hamas' treatment of LGBTQ people; settler colonialism has an industry journal for which Israel virtually serves as the regular whipping post.

Such apparent lopsidedness cascades through the sections. For instance, in the section on "Apartheid," the least Israel-critical article is titled, "Occupation Not Apartheid." Similarly, on the matter of BDS, the pro-Israel voice is counterbalanced by two proponents of the movement. "Intersectional Alliances" goes much the same way. None of the three contributors articulate any semblance of pro-Israel rhetoric: at best, one argues that Mizrahi Jews should align with Palestinians to unseat Ashkenazic political dominance.

One contributor, Joey Ayoub, demonstrates a drawback in the book's handling of intersectional alliances. Ayoub's essay analyzes "Black-Palestinian Solidarity," covering the relationship's historical roots beginning with the Black Panther Party's (BPP). It is superficial at best, misleading at worst. The transnational partnership Ayoub argues that was spurred by conceptions of "imperialism and racial capitalism" is a rather euphemistic airbrush of the BPP and its ilk's conduct since the 1960s. Ayoub points to the 1967 Six-Day War as the flashpoint for Panther activism on Israel/Palestine when, in fact, the conflict seemingly served as a simple pretext for a reservoir of anti-Semitic vitriol. The Panthers June 1967 publication, *Black Power*, featured a poem titled "Jew-land," invoking a call to arms:

"The Jews have stolen our bread/Their filthy women tricked our men into bed/So I won't rest until the Jews are dead."

All of this goes without delving deeper into the *Black Power* constellation of influencers including Malcolm X, Louis Farrakhan or Stokely Carmichael. Suffice to say, Ayoub's halcyon rendering of transnational anti-colonial movements of the Cold War days of yore are not so idealistic under closer inspection.

Such discomforting shortcomings are exacerbated by the prominence of Ilan Pappé's work in bolstering critiques of Israel throughout the edited collection. Pappé rose to prominence in the '80s alongside notable academics Benny Morris and Avi Shlaim for their role in challenging traditional historical narratives. These revisionist "New Historians" focused particularly on the foundational mythologies of Israel, the 1948 War of Independence and the Palestinian exodus. While the scholarship unearthed valuable findings – even Palestinian negotiators throughout the '90s and 2000s referenced these publications – Pappé's reputation has not aged well. His book, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, is repeatedly cited by contributors to *Social Justice and Israel/Palestine*.

Such contributors and subjects illustrate the most valuable proposition *Social Justice and Israel/Palestine* hold for a Jewish audience, namely that contemporary discussions are anchored within a Palestinian-centric lens. This trend is symptomatic of what is happening on campuses broadly speaking: Palestinian activists push for censuring and boycotting Israel, while (mostly) Jewish students react and play catch up. Although academe may not be an ideal proxy for broader societal trends, on campuses, the rhetoric and dialogue ostensibly flow downstream from professorial trends.

The blending of academic literature on Israel/Palestine with activists (several of whom contributed to the book) sprouting from what Peter Boghossian has derisively termed "grievance studies" – fields such as sociology, anthropology and gender studies – has not boded well for Israel's reception.

Joining the ranks of recent publications as Rachel Harris's edited collection, *Teaching the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, and Dov Waxman's *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: What Everyone Needs to Know*, *Social Justice and Israel/Palestine* is a worthy contribution rounding out a field of work seeking to explain the conflict to a broadened, perhaps less-acquainted, audience. *Social Justice and Israel/Palestine* successfully expands the readership's perspective of academic developments, and introduces new methodologies and overlooked actors.

Nonetheless, specific voices are absent from the discussion taking place throughout the book. Though the edited volume strove to be a platform for a range of perspectives, on the pro-Israel side, most arguments are rather muted. Apart from a few entries – such as Prof. Miriam Elman's excerpt on international law and Rachel Fish's on BDS – ostensible "pro-Israel" contributors counterbalancing the labelling of Israel as an apartheid state or a settler colonial enterprise, are rather tepid and underwhelming.

Social Justice and Israel/Palestine remains an accessible to anyone from the curious peruser to the avidly interested. The book is at its most valuable as an educational tool illuminating for the general public beyond the cloistered confines of academia, the prevailing headwinds afoot on campus today. ■

Social Justice and Israel/Palestine
edited by Aaron J. Hahn Tapper and Mira Sucharov
University of Toronto Press

> "Any politically conscious student on a North American campus today will be familiar with the terminology prevalent throughout *Social Justice and Israel/Palestine*, which puts advocates of Israel on a defensive footing."

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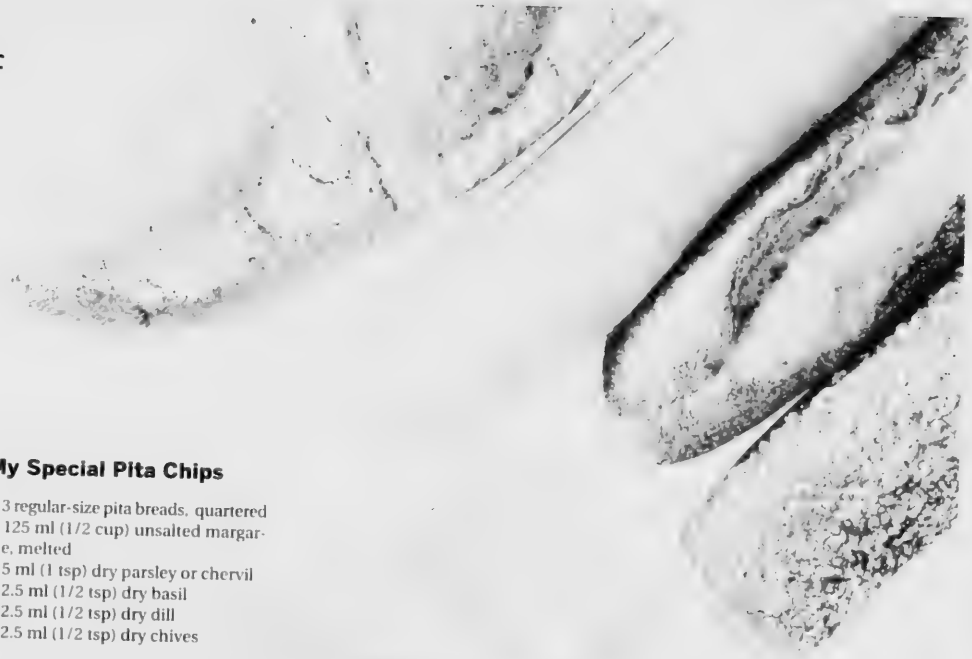
THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
CJN

A pita chip off the old block

SYBIL KAPLAN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

New Year's Eve may have come and gone, but there will be plenty more opportunities to entertain guests in the new year. And just about any gathering can be enhanced with some homemade chips. ■



Toasted French Bread

- 6 slices French bread, cut into small pieces
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled
- 1 large ripe tomato, halved
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) herbes de Provence, or other spice blend

Preheat oven to 200 C (400 F). Place bread pieces on a cookie sheet. Brush both sides with olive oil.

Rub bread with garlic, then tomato. Sprinkle with herbes de Provence and toast until brown.

My Special Pita Chips

- 3 regular-size pita breads, quartered
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) unsalted margarine, melted
- 5 ml (1 tsp) dry parsley or chervil
- 2.5 ml (1/2 tsp) dry basil
- 2.5 ml (1/2 tsp) dry dill
- 2.5 ml (1/2 tsp) dry chives

Preheat oven to 180 C (350 F). Melt margarine in a frying pan, add spices and stir.

Place pita quarters on a cookie sheet. Brush herbed margarine on each piece. Bake for 13 minutes.

Crispy Pita Chips

- 6 pitas, split in two
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) margarine or butter, melted
- 7.5 ml (1½ tsp) Italian seasoning
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) grated Parmesan cheese

Preheat oven to 200 C (400 F). Place split pitas on a baking sheet.

Mix melted butter or margarine and Italian seasoning. Brush each round with herbed liquid. Sprinkle Parmesan cheese on top.

Bake for 8-10 minutes, until brown and crispy. Cut each half into 4-6 triangles.

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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
JANUARY 16, 2020

Old shoebox reveals hidden past in House of Glass

MORDECHAI BEN-DAT
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

House of Glass
By Hadley Freeman
Simon and Schuster

Sometimes an old shoebox at the back of a darkened closet contains more than tired shoes, stained jars of dried shoe wax, brittle brushes and frayed bits of terrycloth. Sometimes, an old shoebox contains a trove of mystery keepsakes, keys that ultimately unlock a family's undiscovered, perhaps even hidden, past, as was the case for 28-year-old Hadley Freeman, when she was rummaging through her late grandmother's closet.

In 2006, Freeman, a successful journalist at the *Guardian* newspaper in London, was looking for information that might anchor a feature story about her late grandmother's relationship to fashion. Instead, she found tantalizing bits and pieces of a puzzle that she would carefully and lovingly assemble into the story of her family. The fortuitous result is the book, *House of Glass*.

Freeman begins her story in the late 19th century with the six-person Glahs family – Reuben, Chaya and their children, Jehuda, Jakob, Sender and Sala – who lived in Chrzanow, a shtetl in modern-day Poland.

Resentment, hatred, anti-Semitism and violence drove the family out of Poland and into France between the two World Wars. Glahs became Glass, Jehuda, Jakob, Sender and Sala became Henri, Jacques, Alex and Sara, respectively. They rebuilt their lives in their adopted home of France, the nation of "liberty, equality and fraternity." But, unfortunately, they could not at the same time rebuild their new host society. Resentment, hatred, anti-Semitism and violence enveloped the Glass family in France, too.

Freeman's grandmother, Sara Glass, left France before the Second World War for the safety of the United States. She was spared the innumerable depredations that her family suffered during the war. Indeed, the very reason for her leaving France was to try to save her family from those very misfortunes and dangers. But, much to her everlasting heartache, she was the sole member of her immediate family to ever live in America. For the rest of her life, Sara Glass pined for Paris and the life she imagined she would have lived there. A noticeable element of sorrow accompanied her throughout her days. Freeman's attempt to understand and grasp her grandmother's sadness was the activating impetus for the book.

In writing the personal histories of all of her grandmother's immediate family members, Freeman necessarily writes about the social, cultural, economic and military histories of the various communities in which they lived. Her research is impressive. She meticulously recorded factual details in the manner of a well trained journalist, ensuring the narrative stands tall against known reliable historical accounts. With a historian's unflinching loyalty to accuracy, often relying upon unredacted records chronicling official cruelty, Freeman masterfully recreates the very dark atmosphere of the times.

France's Vichy government was zealous in its quest to root out Jews. As Freeman frequently notes, Vichy officials often exceeded Nazi orders and expectations. In October 1940, the Vichy government passed a law ordering the internment of all foreign Jews in "special camps," which included the Glass family. More than 40,000 Jews were interned.

The dreadful internment law was enacted during horrendous times. But not all French citizens were horrified. Freeman reproduces an excerpt from a column written in *L'Echo de Pithiviers*, a newspaper in the small city of Pithiviers, where one of the detention camps was located. The author, Jean di Nebelle, celebrated the fact that Jews would now be "behind barbed wire, rather than at the head of our city halls and our great places, as they were previously under the regime of Blume, of Zay, of the Levys and the flea-ridden Semites they brought with them.... Today the rule of the Jews is over. France finally is protecting herself from them. Thus, the wheel turns! And the Jews, yesterday, all powerful, are today merely miserable animals of concentration camps. After having betrayed and ruined us, here they are reduced themselves, impotent and almost deserving of pity!"

By the end of *House of Glass*, the reader is deeply familiar with each member of the Glass family. This is, of course, entirely due to Freeman's skill as a writer. She provides dimension, character and emotion to the individuals whom we meet and come to know throughout the book. Freeman is also to be commended for the delicate literary touch and neat turns of phrase that she employs to depict situations of high or low drama. For example, she writes of her great-uncle Henri and his wife, Sonia, that they "almost never spoke about what they had been through, but they were marked by the experience like a block of clay is by a firm fingerprint."

Freeman never emotionally exploits the many difficult and heartbreaking situations in which the Glass siblings find themselves. She simply writes the truth as she imagined it, or as it was related to her many years later. For example, her great uncle Alex was able to smuggle his mother, Chaya, out of Paris at a particularly dangerous point in the Nazis' occupation of the city. Freeman writes: "Alex achieved an enormous amount in his life, escaping the depths of the Polish pogroms, to climb to the top of the French art world, all thanks to his cunning and determination. But that he managed to sneak his truculent, strictly kosher, non-French speaking mother across the demarcation line was possibly his most extraordinary feat."

Freeman also tries to convey deeper understandings of the historical context by drawing contemporary parallels to issues and politics that dominate and roil public discourse in our own times. But the story does go a bit off the rails when she speculates for nearly an entire chapter about Jewish social mobility, or when she interweaves her own political views and her own understanding of Judaism and Jewish ritual into the story. These opinions detract from the otherwise comprehensive sense of personal and national history that *House of Glass* so admirably conveys. ■

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Opinion

To see a world without Jews, turn on the TV

Michael Fraiman

What does it say about modern society that horrifyingly dystopian alternate realities have become hit TV over the last four years?

Dystopian TV is a relatively new phenomenon, unlike the genre's literary counterpart, which exploded during the war-torn 20th century with *Brave New World*, *It Can't Happen Here*, *Atlas Shrugged* and *Fahrenheit 451*. Among that list of classic dystopian fiction also sits Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, from 1985, and Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle*, from 1962.

Today, both those novels have been adapted into successful TV dramas that have been expanded into gritty universes beyond the scope of the authors' original pages. *The Man in the High Castle*, one of the most popular shows in Amazon's original repertoire, ended its four-season run in November, while the success of *The Handmaid's Tale* (whose showrunner said he'd like to make 10 seasons of the award-winning series) inspired Atwood to write a best-selling sequel that came out in September, which may itself turn into a TV show down the road.

Both shows tread over similar territory, they imagine the fall of the United States government at the hand of a totalitarian regime. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, the U.S. is replaced by a country called Gilead, which is run by zealous Christians, while *The Man in the High Castle* imagines a universe wherein the Axis powers won the Second World War and divided North America between Japanese and German occupation. In both scenarios, Jews wind up dead or in hiding.

So why are these politically charged shows popular now? A simple answer may be that art imitates life. Right now, Western liberalism feels pretty precarious. It is a safer time to be a woman than ever before, for example, which has made it a dangerous time to be a woman. Openness invites anger. When minorities put themselves forward, they become targets.

These shows, which are equal parts parable and omen, bring our collective anxieties to the small screen, envisioning fundamental fears about what could happen. They're telling us not to take this freedom for granted, while also warning us of what might happen if we invite authoritarians to rise to power. Freedom begs paranoia.

Jewish writers are feeling the same thing. In 2018, a new Israeli TV show called *Autonomies* debuted, with subsequent screenings held at film festivals in New York and France.

Created by the team behind *Shtisel*, the show depicts a version of Israel that's divided by religion: a secular Jewish state with Tel Aviv as its capital, and a religious state headquartered in Jerusalem. Unfortunately, I'm not aware of any legal way Canadians can watch it, though an American adaptation is apparently in the works that will swap secular and religious Jews for Democrats and Republicans. Like Jews in Gilead, in this dystopian Holy Land, Arabs are nowhere to be seen.

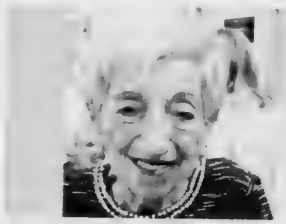
The show could be considered a loose cousin of Israel's first major dystopian novel, *HaDerech LeEin Harod* (1984), which also dealt with the religious right overtaking the nation. The concept is never new and always relevant, so long as religion is seen synonymously with censorship.

As our social and political world becomes increasingly divided, with radicals on both sides fighting for control of government and a louder voice in the media, shows like this will probably keep flourishing. That is, assuming they don't start feeling like documentaries. ■

VADIM BRODSKY PHOTO

Yiddish in the Kremlin

University of Toronto professor (and CJN columnist) Anna Shternshis and singer Psoy Korolenko's project, Yiddish Glory, was honoured as the Cultural Event of the Year and given the Fiddler on the Roof prize at the Kremlin in Moscow on Dec. 18, 2019. The 2018 album, *Yiddish Glory: The Lost Songs of World War II*, featuring songs written in the Soviet Union by Holocaust victims, Holocaust survivors and Jewish Red Army soldiers during the Second World War, was nominated for a 2019 Grammy in the world music category. This was one of the few times that Yiddish songs have been performed at the Kremlin. The Fiddler on the Roof prize has been given annually at the Kremlin since 2002 just before Hanukkah to celebrate achievements in Jewish culture.



Happy 100th birthday to a beautiful lady, Fanny Laufer, on this special occasion! Love from your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren

Mazel tov to Geraldine Kalter on your birthday! Wishing you good health, with love from Matia, Dina-Sura, Abraham, Sara, Sylvia, Henry and family

Feel like kvelling? Submit your digital photos with a description of up to 25 words to **www.CJNews.com/mazeltov**. For any questions, email **jgreen@thecjn.ca**.

Parashah

Shemot | Exodus 1:1 6:1

Joshua Schwartz studies the physical and psychic instruments of oppression
Rabbi Avram Rothman traces Moses' transformative path toward greatness
Rachael Turkienicz explores the difference between the names "Exodus" and "Shemot"

Joshua Schwartz

When we speak of our people's exile in Egypt, we tend to focus on the servitude. After all, this is what God predicted when Abraham entered into the covenant: "Your descendants will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be slaves there." We focus, in other words, on the facts of the oppression, but not its meaning. What is it to be enslaved? What does it mean to enslave another?

While the instrument is physical, the true result sought in enslavement is the imposition of another's will in an attempt to re-form the body to conform to what another wants of it, rather than it reaching its capacity. To truly enact servitude, one must break another's spirit

Egypt worked the Israelites *b'farekh*, which comes from the verb "to break" or "crush." In the very next verse, the psychic dimensions of enslavement become clear: "They made their lives bitter … with all kinds of field work, all the oppressive labours they instituted."

The Netziv writes that the Egyptians' program was, ultimately, a war on dignity. The work they chose for us was intentionally designed to degrade us and make us feel shame.

In the end of the Netziv's comment, we see the secret engine that drove Pharaoh's program of dehumanization. He writes, "Even the working class, who were used to this kind of work, for them, too, their work was intended to break their bodies and minds."

The fact that there was already a group of people whose dignity was seen as commonly demeaned set the stage to expand that oppressive dynamic to the rest of the Children of Israel. Work must instead be a source of dignity, in which those who contribute their bodies and souls to the building of a nation must have their share in what they produce protected and ensured. We must take this weapon away from those who wish to turn the gifts of our bodies and wills against those who offer them up. ■

Joshua Schwartz is the spiritual leader of Beth Lida Forest Hill Synagogue.

Rabbi Avram Rothman

This week's parashah introduces us to Moses, who is raised in Pharaoh's palace but feels compelled to mingle with his brothers, the Jewish slaves.

In successive verses, the Torah twice states that Moses grew up. First, we read, "The boy grew up and she brought him to the daughter of Pharaoh, and he was a son to her."

The very next verse says, "It happened in those days that Moses grew up and went out to his brethren and saw their burdens."

The commentaries are perplexed by the fact that the Torah tells us twice that Moses grew up, one line after another. However, the commentators note that there are some significant differences in the context of the verses.

In the first verse, the Torah is telling us that Moses grew up physically. He was a baby, then a toddler, adolescent and teenager. Very straightforward.

The second verse not only tells us that Moses grew up, but it adds that he went to be among his Jewish brothers and felt their pain. This is not telling us that Moses grew older, but rather that he became greater.

In the Jewish world, we have a concept of the "great ones," rabbis with not only great Torah knowledge, but much more significantly, they feel the pain and suffering of their Jewish brothers.

Moses, you see, did not only grow up, he became great. He became a man who chose to feel the pain of the Jewish slaves, a man who later would even feel the pain of lost animals. He became a compassionate, caring, feeling and sensitive man. He got older, but he became great in his choosing to help the slaves.

This is what the Torah is teaching us by repeating the phrase. The definition of a great person is one who feels, cares and acts for others. That is what made Moses special, and it is what we should aspire to become if we want to become great. ■

Rabbi Avram Rothman is the senior rabbi of the Aish Thornhill Community Shul in Toronto.

Rachael Turkienicz

This Shabbat we start reading the second book of the Torah, Exodus. The name of the book already seems to tell us about the focal point. It wants us to celebrate the Exodus from Egypt, the miraculous events of God delivering Israel from the slavery of Egypt. By describing the magnitude of the plagues, the introduction of Moses, choosing God and being spared from the Angel of Death, the book details the uniqueness of that event

The only problem is that the book in Hebrew is not called Exodus, it's called Shemot (Names). It begins with a list of the names of Jacob's sons who entered Egypt, and then quickly describes a reality of slavery where everyone loses their names

The second chapter begins with a man from the tribe of Levi marrying a woman from the tribe of Levi and having a baby. The baby's sister and the daughter of Pharaoh are introduced shortly after, but none of these individuals are mentioned by name until much later. Interesting presentation for a book whose title is Names.

More confusing is the fact that we do not have a biblical word for "exodus." We have a mundane phrase that means "the going out from Egypt," but not the grand word "exodus." However, in truth, the Torah does not intend to focus on the exodus from Egypt. It intends to focus on where we're going.

Leaving Egypt is a necessary condition for arriving at Sinai. Sinai is the place where we meet God, choose to accept His covenant and gain our identity as a people. The book is called Shemot because our names are our identities. We cannot gain identity as slaves with no say in our destinies. Leaving Egypt is a step, not a goal.

The name Exodus misdirects us into thinking it is the miracles that matter. The Hebrew name, Shemot, reminds us that life is not about searching for miracles, it is about facing who we are and imagining who we could become. ■

Rachael Turkienicz is the executive director of Rachael's Centre in Toronto (rachaelscentre.com).

Social Scene

Eva Friedman, Peter Friedman, president and Rabbi Dan Rand, executive director

Lior Raz

Ziv Shilon

Eitan Zebow and Jack Mendelker

Evening of Heroes

TORONTO

Ezer Mizion held their first ever Evening of Heroes event which included a beautiful cocktail reception, followed by the moving and gripping stories of Lior Raz, Israeli star and creator of *Fauda* and Capt. Ziv Shilon, an IDF war hero. The "Evening of Heroes" pleased the palate and touched the heart. There was not a dry eye in the room, when Jack, a Toronto-born bone marrow recipient, met his donor Eitan, who flew from Israel, to greet his new "Blood Brother." ■

Event chairs Randy and Esti Cohen, Karen and Jeff Moness

Frank and Eva Mayer, Janice and Dr. Howard Langer

Yael and Zvi Katzman, Nati Philosophe and Jonathan Tkatch

Jerry Klasner and Sara Icyk

Lee Rand, Mike Rand, Rabbi Dan Rand and Paula Rand

Jackie Orzech, Lauren Rubinoff, Cara Tkatch and Rachel Philosophe

Josh and Jen Zaret

Esty Edell, Noam Edell and Chani Edell

MYRIAM ENCAUOUA PHOTOS

What's New

JAN. 16 - 23

by Lila Sarick

Thursday, Jan. 16

JUDAISM'S GIFTS TO THE WORLD
Six-week course to learn the Jewish secrets to feeling good, however you feel, with **Rabbi Moishe Schurder**
Chabad of Markham, 8 p.m. Register chabadmarkham.org/gifts

THE ANTI-SEMITISM TOOLBOX
Michael Mostyn, **Lawrence Hart**, **Daniel Koren** and **Lauren Isaacs** give talks about anti-Semitism. Chabad Romano, 10500 Bathurst St., 7-9:30 p.m., free. Register: JewsAgainstAntiSemitismCanada@gmail.com.

WHAT'S IN A NAME
Prof. Kalman Weiser discusses "What's in a Jewish Name?" 7:30 p.m., Holy Blossom Temple, $10 for non-members.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT
Julia Migounova of the Bernard Betel Centre discusses "Bringing Elder Abuse Into the Light," noon, Beth Emeth, free. RSVP: 416-633-3838.

Helping the homeless

Members of Chabad of Markham went to downtown Toronto last month to distribute blankets, warm clothes and other winter necessities. They also set up a stand to distribute hot coffee to passersby. From left, Michelle Benjamin, Rachel Benjamin, Macey Tessler, Rochelle Tessler, Kennedy Friedman, Taryn Friedman and Dayle Friedman.

Saturday, Jan. 18

THE SONG SHUL
The Song Shul features a Shabbat program of cantorial classics, 9 a.m., 2760 Bathurst St. Info: songshul.com.

FAMILY HAVDALAH NIGHT
Chabad Russian Centre of Thornhill Woods holds a family *Havdalah* night, 6:30 p.m., 8808 Bathurst St. RSVP: JewishTW.org.

Sunday, Jan. 19

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS
Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner discusses "Seeking Psychological Counselling," 8:45 a.m., BAYT. Info: 647-234-7299, or info@torontotorah.com.

Deadline:
The deadline for the Jan. 30 paper is Jan. 20.
All deadlines are at noon.
Phone: 416-391-1836 ext. 269;
email:
whatsnewcjn@gmail.com.

JEWISH STORYTELLING GUILD
Open mike for tellers and listeners of traditional and personal Jewish stories, 7:30 p.m., Congregation Habonim, 5 Glen Park Ave., $5 or pay what you can. Info: jewishstorytelling@gmail.com, or 416-633-7765.

SPEAKING FOR ISRAEL
Aviva Klompas discusses her new book, *Speaking for Israel*, 10:30 a.m., Kehillat Shaarei Torah, 2640 Bayview Ave. Register: shaareitorah.com.

Monday, Jan. 20

MITZVAH KNITTERS
Mitzvah knitters meet at Beth Tikvah Synagogue, 1-3 p.m., 3080 Bayview Ave. Patterns and yarn supplied. Info: mitzvahknitters@gmail.com.

WINTER FILM AFTERNOONS
The documentary *Data Mining the Deceased: Ancestry and the Business of Family* is shown at Beth Tzedec, 1 p.m., $5 donation for Out of the Cold program requested. **Prof. Julia Creet** will answer questions following the film. RSVP: 416-781-3511.

Tuesday, Jan. 21

SHABBAT ON TUESDAY
Cantor Sidney Ezer, choir director **Ezra Burke** and **Yacov Fruchter** hold a sing-along, 8 p.m., Beth Tzedec. Free. Info: 416-781-3511.

TUESDAY STUDY GROUP
Mark Bulgutch discusses "False News" at a Women of Adath study group breakfast at 9:30 a.m. Non-members, $10 per session. Info: **Marjorie**, 416-780-9156.

THE ANTI-SEMITISM TOOLBOX
Ryan Clow (UJA), **Jason Grossman** (CIJA) and **Det. Mark Topping** (York Regional Police) discuss hate crimes and community security, Chabad Romano, 10500 Bathurst St., 7-9 p.m., free. Register: JewsAgainstAntiSemitismCanada@gmail.com.

Wednesday, Jan. 22

ISRAELI NATIONAL SECURITY
IDF Brig.-Gen. Ram Shmueli discusses "Lessons Learned From 40 Years in an F-16 Cockpit and How It Is Inspiring Israeli Educational Reform," 7:30 p.m., Adath Israel. Members free, guests $10. RSVP: adathisrael.com/event/shmueli.

THE KABBALAH OF GOOD HEALTH
A five-week course on the Kabbalah of Good Health starts tonight, 8 p.m., Chabad of Markham. Info: chabadmarkham.org.

JEWISH SPIRITUALITY SEMINAR
Rabbi Michael Skobac discusses "Personal Growth Through Mussar," 7:30 p.m., Village Shul. Free. RSVP: 416-789-0020, or carol@jewsforjudaism.org.

HOW A POEM MOVES
Prof. Adam Sol discusses "How a Jewish Poem Moves," Jan. 22 and 29, 7:30 p.m., Holy Blossom Temple, $10 for non-members.

Thursday, Jan. 23

ANTI-SEMITISM THEN AND NOW
Lauren Isaacs of Herut Canada and **Diane Bederman** of Hasbara discuss "Anti-Semitism Through the Ages," 7:30 p.m., Beth Emeth, $5.

THE CANTOR
Rabbi Wayne Allen discusses "The Cantor: From the Mishnah to Modernity," 7:30 p.m., Beth David.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Et Cetera

CANCER SUPPORT

Cancer support for Jewish women, including social programs, educational events and resources can be found at L'Chaim. Info: 416-630-0203, or lchaim@ncjwctoronto.org.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Beth Tzedec Men's Club offers scholarships to students pursuing programs of higher Jewish education. Applicants do not need to be a member of Beth Tzedec. Details: 416-781-3511, or hershr@rogers.com.

CONVERSATIONAL HEBREW

Pride of Israel Synagogue offers three levels of *ulpan*-method lessons, daytime or evening. Info: 416-226-0111 ext. 201

CAREGIVING STUDY

Baycrest is looking at the experiences of men 80 and older who are caring for a wife with dementia. Participation involves two to three interviews, in person or on the phone. Contact **Ifah**, 416-946-3724, or iarbel@research.baycrest.org.

BRAIN AGING PROJECT

Baycrest is looking for adults aged 60-85 who are noticing changes to their memory and/or thinking skills, for a study. Must be available for three testing sessions at Baycrest and 10 weekly training sessions at local community centres. Call **Yael**, 416-785-2500 ext. 3377.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

- Baycrest is looking for volunteers, contact 416-785-2500 ext. 2572, or volunteer@baycrest.org.
- Beit Halochem, Aid to Disabled Veterans of Israel is seeking hosts to welcome veterans into their homes this spring. Details: 905-695-0611, or beithalochem.ca.

For Seniors

- **Association of Jewish Seniors.** Jan. 16, **Yifat Bear Miller** of the Jewish National Fund will discuss the latest news from Israel. Shaarei Shomayim, breakfast at 9:30 a.m., $5 for non-members. Register: **Rozlin**, 647-340-7961.
- **Bernard Betel Centre**, 416-225-2112. Jan. 21, **Michael Friesen** discusses "Toronto's Jewish Community." 10 a.m., $4.25/$8.50; Jan. 23, **Jerry Scherer** discusses "An Introduction to Genealogy," 1:30 p.m., free. Register now for a course on the Rise of Populism, Nationalism and Autocratic Regimes, Feb. 6.-March 26, $68/$136. Register: **Sharon**, ext. 124.
- **Holy Blossom.** Cantorial soloist **Lindi Rivers** is the guest, Jan. 20. Program includes exercise and lunch, 10 a.m 1 p.m., $3/$5.

Prosserman JCC

Donald Gales Family Pavilion on the Sherman Campus, 4588 Bathurst St., 416-638-1881 ext. 4020; prossermanjcc.com.

- Experience World Cultures Through Classical Music starts Jan. 24, 11 a.m.; Connecting With Technology starts Jan. 27, 11 a.m.; **Shlomo Schwartzberg** discusses "Movies From Outside North America," four weeks, starting Jan. 15, 1-4 p.m.
- Shalom Singers Choir, a non-auditioned choir that performs in the community, meets Mondays at 2 p.m.; supervised mah-jong meets Wednesdays at 1 p.m.; drop-in duplicate bridge, Thursdays at 12:30 p.m.
- Ongoing programs include Israeli folk dancing, choir, Yiddish conversation and more.

Miles Nadal JCC

750 Spadina Ave., 416-924-6211, mnjcc.org.

- Strength of Self, alternating Mondays, 11 a.m. A program for women who have experienced abuse. Call ext. 147.
- The New Hollywood of the '60s and '70s with film critic **Adam Nayman**, Mondays, 1:30 p.m. Register: ext. 155.
- **Seniors Arts and Culture**, ext. 155, lisar@mnjcc.org. Community dance workshops led by **Karen Kaeja** of Kaeja d'Dance meet Wednesdays starting Jan. 15, 1 p.m. Create simple dances, no dance experience needed. Register: 416-516-6030. Comedian **Hart Pomerantz** discusses "The Hart and Lorne Terrific Hour," Jan. 16, 1 p.m. **Cantor Sidney Ezer** and **Asher Farber** celebrate Shabbat in song, Jan. 24, 12:30 p.m. Free (includes kosher lunch). Advance registration required at ext. 0.
- **Seniors Fitness**, ext. 521. Start Here, a free community wellness integration program designed to provide peer support, community engagement and learning and recovery opportunities Agency referral required. Call ext. 574
- Michael Bernstein Chapel holds services Thursdays at 7:15 a.m. and Sundays at 8 a.m. Info: **Coleman**, 416-968-0200.

Schwartz/Reisman Centre

Joseph and Wolf Lebovic JCC, 9600 Bathurst St., 905-303-1821. Contact **Andrea** for info: andrea@srcentre.ca, or ext. 3006.

- Programs for people with Parkinson's: boxing classes, contact yorkregion@rsbaffilate.com; cycling program, Thursdays at 1:30 p.m., contact stephen@srcentre.ca; mindfulness, contact melissa@theyogapath.ca
- Drop-in duplicate bridge, Tuesdays at 6:45 p.m.
- J-Choir, a non-auditioned choir starts Jan. 20 at 7:30 p.m.; J-House Band starts Jan. 21 at 7:30 p.m.; Experience World Cultures Through Classical Music starts Jan. 21 at 11 a.m.; Connecting With Technology starts Jan. 22 at 10:30 a.m.
- Recreational programs for children, teens and young adults with autism spectrum disorder, contact karina@srcentre.ca, or ext. 3042

Jewish Family & Child

Groups are open to all members of the community. A sliding scale is offered for those who need fee reductions. Registration required. Call **Shawna Sidney**, 416-638-7800 ext. 6215, or jfandcs.com/groups.

- High-Conflict Divorce: a workshop for parents to develop strategies to deal with a high-conflict situation. Not for those in an abusive situation. Jan. 28, 7-9 p.m., 4600 Bathurst St. ■

Getting married?
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AUTHORS & POETS

THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
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Annual Passover Literary Supplement

We invite readers to submit unpublished, original short stories or poetry that explore Jewish themes.

They should not exceed 2,000 words. Selected submissions will appear in the Passover Supplement of The CJN on April 2, 2020. Not all submissions can be published, and not all those selected will appear in both Toronto and Montreal editions. We look for originality. Please don't send more than three entries.

We cannot correspond with contributors.

Deadline for submissions is Feb. 28, 2020 at noon

E-mail submissions to:

cjnliterarysupplement@gmail.com

We can only accept email submissions. We prefer Word documents.

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Canadian launches cosmetic brand with charitable focus

SUSAN MINUK
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Nicole Abbott, centre, poses for a picture with her children Madison, left, and Adam, at the Hey Babe launch party in September. ERIC BENCHIMAL PHOTOGRAPHY

Hey Babe Cosmetics was created with a purpose: to make a difference. Nicole Abbott, 48, created an exclusive line of Canadian-made makeup that's hypoallergenic, non toxic and paraben and cruelty-free, which she launched in September.

"I was a widow first at 28 and then at 45," said Abbott. "I have dealt with grief for a long time. I have lost two husbands, my home to a fire when I was pregnant with my daughter. I said to my kids we are going to dig deep and pick ourselves up. I wanted to teach my 20-year-old son Adam and 13-year old daughter Madison about giving back and making a difference."

What makes Hey Babe stand out from the crowd is that a portion of the proceeds from all its sales support the memory of Abbott's late husbands, Charles Krowitz and Allen Abbott.

Eighteen years ago, Abbott started the Charles Krowitz Fund for Burkitt's Lymphoma Research at Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto. Burkitt is a form of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in which cancer starts in immune cells called B-cells.

"My family and I raised $1 million for Burkitt's lymphoma," said Abbott. "Every $100,000 would go towards a fellow who researched Burkitt's lymphoma."

Married in 1995, Abbott had been with her late husband for eleven years, married for four of those, when Krowitz died in 2000. Their son was only eight months old at the time.

"Charles got sick while I was pregnant. His diagnosis to death was six months," said Abbott.

She met Allen Abbott on a blind date. "We both had our challenges. I lost my husband and he was suffering from kidney disease and was living with a transplanted kidney," said Abbott. "We dated with Adam in a stroller. He didn't blink an eye."

Allen Abbott raised the boy as his own. They married in 2003 and had Madison Abbott in 2006. In 2010, Allen Abbott started experiencing problems with his transplanted kidney. By 2014, his kidney was functioning at only nine per cent.

"Transplant kidneys only last for so many years – the span is anywhere from eight to 10 to 12 years and Allen's lasted for 21 years," said Abbott. "We were looking for a kidney. I had been tested but I was not compatible. For the next four years, Allan was in and out of the hospital, fighting infections until his death in 2017."

Abbott created the Allen David Abbott Scar Wars Fellowship Fund at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto to support pioneering fibrosis research. Fibrosis is at the root of most types of heart and kidney failure, including the kind that claimed Allen Abbott's life.

Dr. Darren Yuen, a clinician-scientist with the Keenan Research Centre who treated Allen Abbott, explained that, "The Allen David Abbott Scar Wars Fellowship will fund research and support the next generation of clinician-scientists whose goal is to make breakthroughs in drug therapies that prevent or reverse fibrosis."

In the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges, Abbott is proud of her achievements. As a professional makeup artist, she was partial to a particular shade of pink. When the company that produced the line discontinued it, she went online and tracked down the last tubes.

"I received the last shipment just after Allen passed away. I smelled something horrible – lipstick has a shelf life and it was rancid," said Abbott. "It all started with that pink lipstick.... I had life change on me yet again and I said to myself, 'I've got to do something.' I know makeup. I always dreamed of having my own company. That's when ideas came to me."

And that's how Hey Babe was born. "Before we duplicated that exact pink – it took about five tries. So Hey Babe actually has five pinks in the line. I kept them all," she said.

The collection has three pod eye shadow palettes – matte day look, shimmer nighttime look and glam party look. "They are all beautiful, thin in size, travel well, blend well, are triple milled – which means they go on really easily and are highly pigmented so they stay on," explained Abbott.

Hey Babe products include brushes and accessories, touch up concealer/brighteners, BB creams, pressed powders, setting sprays, gel eye pencils, pro eye palettes, mascara, lip pencils, lipsticks, lip lacquers and lip glosses.

"There are some 55 products in my line. My lips are my hottest item," said Abbott. ■

Hey Babe Cosmetics can be purchased at heybabecosmetics.ca.

Ram Shmueli: Keeping Israelis safe – and educated

ALEX ROSE

Retired Brig.-Gen. Ram Shmueli is the former head of intelligence for the Israeli Air Force and now heads an organization that's working to reform the Israeli education system. In 2015, he was awarded the Jerusalem Award for Unity, for his efforts to unite different parts of Israeli society. He will be in Toronto in late January and will give a talk at Adath Israel synagogue on Jan. 22.

What's on your mind at the moment?

This is a very sensitive time in the Middle East, as you see. In two days, everything can change. Usually, very important things are happening secretly. So only once it's happened do you know what's happened. This is the situation.

Not that I know what's going to happen, I'm not on active duty now, so I don't know anything. But I have my experience to feel what's happening and I know something is happening. But you can never know what will happen with Iran and the U.S. and how it will influence Israel. These are very sensitive times.

So I have only my experience from the past. For example, I was the head of the intelligence when we realized that there was a hidden nuclear reactor in Syria. As you know, we destroyed the reactor. But nobody could have imagined when they had to make that decision – including Prime Minister Ehud Olmert – that in five or six years, the area would be controlled by ISIS. Try to imagine if ISIS had control of an active nuclear reactor.

These are the things that are at stake when you speak about the Middle East. So I can't predict the future, but I know, based on my experience, that something is happening here and it's very sensitive.

What will you talk about when you're in Toronto?

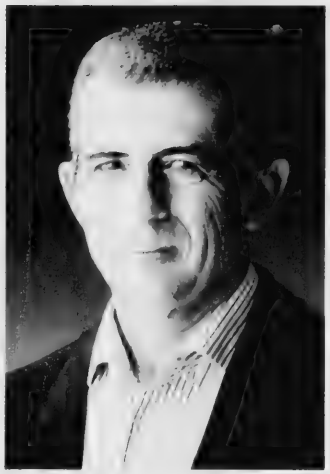
I will combine both my operational experience as an F-16 squadron commander, so I'm going to share with the people some stories from the cockpit. And then I will jump to stories about decision-making, when you're in the position of the decision maker, supporting the prime minister, the Ministry of Defence and the chief of staff in making decisions. And then I will try to apply my experience to the future. How can I see what is happening now in the Middle East? Who are the key players when Israel is at stake, and how should we manage this kind of a chaotic situation?

What was your experience like as the head of Israeli Air Force intelligence?

Most people in the army do not go through intelligence, so it's a fortune for me that I had the opportunity to be in the internal intelligence ecosystem in Israel.

And of course, after 9/11, the co-operation between countries all over the world became much stronger. So I had many, many tools in many countries. Al-Qaida built a net, like a spider web of people. They don't have a structure or hierarchy of regular organizations like we have in our countries. Al-Qaida, they believe differently. They have the spirit and the spirit was spread all over the world and there is no hierarchy that someone gives the orders and everybody does it. So the intelligence community all over the world had to adjust itself.

In order to fight a net, you have to build a net against it – and I was part of it. I saw it happening all over the world, we started sharing more knowledge. You know, the problem of intelligence, since it is so secret, you don't want to share. And if every country keeps its own knowledge, it makes us weak against al-Qaida. Since 9/11, I see the intelligence community all over the world started to co-operate very deeply, unlike they've done before.



Ram Shmueli

So why did you turn to education after leaving active duty?

For me, it's very natural. When you're a commander and you have thousands of groups and people and pilots and mechanics, you are an educator. For me, I think that the strength of a country is due to its education system.

National security stands on three pillars. One of them is good armed forces, second is a good economy and third is good education. So for me, it was natural to go there. So this is how I became the head of a boarding school and then I became the head of a national movement about the social cohesion and another national movement about identity and connecting to the ground. And then today, after 11 years, I decided to wrap everything together and build the National Education Board.

Why did you build it?

The National Board of Education is a kind of a coalition in order to help Israel to build a ten-year plan for our education system. We have nine warning alarms that tell us if we are going to keep on like this in our education system, we might wake up in 2030 and see that we are behind the other countries, even though some people will tell you 'hey, Israel is a startup nation. We have a good economy. The shekel is strong. So why do we have to change the education system?' Yes, we are strong, but this is what's happening now. And if you look at the future, all of those warning alarms, they tell us that the gap between the poor and the rich is almost the highest in the world, the productivity rate is very low compared to the world. The excellency in studying is not good enough compared to other countries, and the status of the teacher is low. So all of those tell you that you have to act, you have to act because we are on the edge of a crisis in the educational system.

Why is education one of the pillars of national security?

It's very simple. Even Yitzhak Rabin, in his famous speech after winning the Six-Day War, said that it was not the tanks and not the airplanes, it was the spirit of the people that won the war. And since I've been in combat all my life, I always know that the spirit of the people and the quality of the people are the issue. It's kind of a brain confrontation between the enemy and ourselves. So our human resource, especially in Israel, is the most important resource that we have. ■

This interview has been edited and condensed for style and clarity.

Sonny Goldstein, CFP
President

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Ontario's unsung Jewish hero

FRANKLIN BIALYSTOK

Joseph Baruch (J.B.) Salsberg, was the king of Toronto's Kensington Market neighbourhood during the interwar period.

Salsberg was a radical who joined the nascent Communist Party of Canada in the 1920s and gained notoriety and popularity as a fighter for the rights of the working class. He first ran for provincial office in the St. Andrew riding, the only one with a majority of Jewish votes, in 1934, losing to the Liberal candidate. Nine years later, in a bitterly contested election, Salsberg, who was running under the Labor-Progressive banner, was narrowly elected, and served until 1955, when he was defeated in an even more hostile contest by Conservative Allan Grossman.

Salsberg spent much of his time in office pressing for human rights in the province, which culminated in the Fair Employment Practices Act. He went on to be revered as a speaker and writer, including writing a long-standing column in the *Canadian Jewish News*.

But the man who beat Salsberg in 1934, and lost to him in 1943, John Judah (J.J.) Glass, is lost to history. His service to Canada in general, and Canadian Jews in particular, is deserving of public awareness.

Glass was born either in Russia or England (there are varying accounts) in 1897 and arrived in Toronto in 1905. Unlike Salsberg and the vast majority of Jewish immigrants, he grew up in a middle-class home, attended the prestigious University of Toronto Schools, received a bachelor's degree from U of T and graduated from Osgoode Hall Law School.

He served with the Canadian Army during the First World War, winning the Military Medal, and again in the Second World War, retiring as a captain. Glass, a practising lawyer, was deeply entrenched in the Jewish establishment. He was president of the Men's Club at Goel Tzedec Congregation, the Toronto Zionist Council and Bnai Brith Lodge, a founder of the Canadian Jewish Congress when it was resuscitated in 1934 and active in campaigns that worked to support Jews in Mandatory Palestine.

Glass was elected to the Toronto Board of Education from 1928 to 1930, and as an alderman from 1930 to 1934, prior to his career in the Ontario legislature. While Salsberg became rightly lauded as

> "...attempt to remove 'Gentiles Only' signs that appeared on the Toronto Island beaches..."

a pioneer in the struggle for human rights and anti-discrimination legislation, Glass had already made his mark on that score.

On city council, as chairman of the city's parks commission during a period of rabid anti-Semitism in 1932, one year before the Christie Pits Riot, he attempted to remove "Gentiles Only" signs that appeared on the Toronto Island beaches, but was stymied by the commission. Nevertheless, it was the first attempt in the city to outlaw such discriminatory practices.

In 1934, Marcus Hyman, a Jewish member of Manitoba's legislative assembly, gained support for an amendment to the Libel Act, which prevented publications that libelled "race" or religion, the first such law in Canada. While contesting the 1937 provincial election, which took place in the midst of a boycott of Jewish stores, Glass sought to initiate such legislation in Ontario.

Although it was withdrawn by Liberal Premier Mitchell Hepburn, who was convinced it would be rendered unconstitutional, it paved the way for the passage of the Racial Discrimination Act in 1944, under Conservative Premier George Drew. That bill passed, in part, due to lobbying by the Canadian Jewish Congress and because Drew asked Salsberg to draft the wording, which, in and of itself, was a progressive step in the province's history.

Glass died in 1973. In his last decades, he remained active with Beth Tzedec Congregation and B'nai Brith, and was honoured with the Israel Service Award for raising funds for the state during the 1967 Six-Day War. His memory is for a blessing. ■

Franklin Bialystok is a lecturer in the centres for Jewish studies and Canadian studies at the University of Toronto.

Healthy Aging

The four pillars of healthy aging

Dr. Vivien Brown

The new year is a chance for new resolutions. Or perhaps what we really need is a refresh of previous plans, resolutions and goals that we have made many times before.

Why haven't we succeeded? Were we too ambitious, too hopeful, too unrealistic to maintain the road forward. I think that, as we contemplate where we want to be, reflecting on where we have come from and what our goals are, we should remember that it's the journey that matters, not the final destination.

As I look at the major pillars of healthy aging, the first area of focus is nutrition. Not dieting, not getting to a certain weight, but making good choices with the aim of feeling stronger, leaner and more energetic.

What we eat does indeed have a huge impact on our bodies. Everything from bone health to the risk of dementia is partially related to nutrition. So say yes to a variety of multicoloured fruits and vegetables, yes to low-fat dairy products, small amounts of nuts and healthy proteins. Yes to appropriate fibre choices and food that's high in antioxidants. And say yes to smaller portions, balanced meals and more water. At the same time, steer clear of poor quality, fast food options, even when convenient and easy.

The second pillar is activity. My resolution is not to go to the gym more often. Been there, done that, got the T-shirt and it hasn't worked for me. My goal is to be more active every day, gym or not. Walk to the bus stop, take the stairs, meet a friend for tennis or squash or golf or skiing, not lunch or dinner. Skip the movie and try out trampolining, rock climbing, yoga or Pilates.

Let's make activity the goal and watch our energy levels increase. When patients tell me they are chronically tired, one of the areas that often has been neglected is activity. Our muscles have memory and there is a correlation between exercise on

> "...everything from bone health to the risk of dementia is partially related to nutrition..."

a regular basis and energy. We no longer keep people in bed for days after surgery. Get up, get moving and keep moving.

The third pillar for healthy aging is all about social connectedness. We are less likely to suffer from dementia and more likely to stay healthy and independent when we are part of a community. When we continue to learn new things, to try out different things and to connect with others, we keep our brain growing and new wires and neural connections increasing. When we are emotionally involved with a project, a goal, a team or a vision, we demand more of ourselves and of others. Our confidence, self-esteem and overall well-being are impacted in a positive way.

You may choose volunteer work, working with schools, hospitals or for political causes. The what is not important; it is the how and why that matters. Working on something that matters to you allows you to avoids stagnation and isolation, which are the enemies of growth and development.

The fourth pillar for this house to stand tall is lifestyle. By that, I mean our stress levels and our intake of drugs and alcohol, our sleep patterns and the choices we make. Choose wisely, carefully and with the knowledge that you matter.

Sometimes we need to learn to say no. Saying no to something that is just too much for you is, in reality, saying yes to something else. If the cost to you – in terms of time, energy or whatever – is too great for you, just say no. Then you will have said yes to yourself.

It's your time to eat healthy, your time to be active, your time to move forward along your chosen path. Now that is a good beginning to 2020. ■

OBITUARIES AND RELATED NOTICES

BENJAMIN'S PARK MEMORIAL CHAPEL

David Szego	Dec 27/19	26 Valleyview Road
Dr. Larry Hoffman	Dec 29/19	567 Rye Road
Rosalyn Rosenthal	Jan 2/20	784 Centre Street
Roger de Pinto	Jan 1/20	3 Tofino Crescent
Norma Fitch	Dec 27/19	351 Chrystie Street
Catherine Adam	Jan 2/20	85 Admiral Road
Marilyn Lastman	Jan 1/20	33 Delisle Avenue
Jean Sone	Jan 5/20	4003 Bayview Avenue
Mali Fenigstein	Jan 5/20	8 Covington Road
Joseph Fialkov	Jan 5/20	2600 Bathurst Street
Bonnie Burstow	Jan 4/20	441 Clinton Street
Ron Weir	Jan 6/20	33 Elmhurst Avenue
Agnes Klein	Jan 7/20	106 Richview Avenue
Chuck Hudes	Jan 7/20	550 Cummer Avenue
Vlad Calman	Jan 7/20	8 Cottonwood Court
Dr. Peter Stephen Rockman	Jan 6/20	42 Lilac Avenue
Reva Gerstein	Jan 6/20	625 Avenue Road
Sydney Solomons	Jan 7/20	484 Steeles Avenue West
Rose Anne Berman	Jan 7/20	2200 Avenue Road
Irving Kreidstein	Jan 7/20	368 Woodsworth Road

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Norma (Loeb) Keshen	Jan 2/20	64 Burnaby Blvd.

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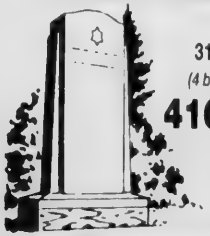

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Putting Ottawa on notice

Groups call for Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps to be added to terror list. **PAGE 12**

Come From Away, Israeli style

When an El Al flight made an emergency landing, the Jews of Halifax stepped up. **PAGE 16**

How to pray in a house of mourning

A new siddur aims to provide comfort through ritual at the shivah house. **PAGE 31**

Gravlaks, courtesy of a 'viking Jewess'

This Norwegian Jew infuses her fillet with tradition. And no, it's not called 'lox.' **PAGE 7**

MISSING IN ACTION

Piecing together the story of a Jewish-Canadian pilot who never came home. **PAGE 8**

CANDLELIGHTING, HAVDALAH TIMES

Halifax	4:53 p.m.	6:00 p.m.
Montreal	4:30 p.m.	5:38 p.m.
Ottawa	4:39 p.m.	5:47 p.m.
Toronto	4:59 p.m.	6:05 p.m.
Winnipeg	4:51 p.m.	6:04 p.m.
Calgary	4:54 p.m.	6:09 p.m.
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Quotable

"[illegible]"

– A clue from Jeopardy that producers struck from the record, due to controversy over whether it's located in Israel or Palestine.

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Sgt. Harry Black, centre, on leave in Cardiff, Wales, during the Second World War. COVER PHOTO BY LORNE WINER

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Trending

A rabbi walks into a fight

Ralph Benmergui's new podcast series, *Not That Kind of Rabbi*, consists of interviews conducted through a spiritual lens. But his guests seem just as likely to profess to having no religious leaning at all. His recent interview with financial commentator Lou Schizas turned into an intense debate over whether or not perpetuating capitalism at any cost makes for a fulfilling life. Forthcoming episodes also include Benmergui's interviews with former Ontario premier Kathleen Wynne, right-wing commentator turned left-wing reverend Michael Coren and TVOntario host Steve Paikin – who also claims to lack a spiritual disposition.

Canada's BFF of estranged royalty

Jessica Mulroney was known to be a close friend of Meghan Markle, dating back to when the future Duchess of Sussex was shooting the show *Suits* in Toronto. Mulroney came under increased media scrutiny after the royal couple announced their intention to relocate to Canada. The descendant of the founders of Browns Shoes became a magnet for paparazzi, who staked out the house she shares with her husband, Ben Mulroney, and three children. But then she took off for Jamaica, to shoot an episode of her own show about wedding makeovers, *I Do, Redo*.

The door to game show dealing

Monty Hall, the *Let's Make a Deal* host who died in 2017 at the age of 96, has his own segment in the six-part documentary series, *The Search for Canada's Game Shows*. Born Monte Halperin in Winnipeg, Hall was a teenage math wizard who wanted to become a doctor, but was ultimately rebuffed by secret medical school quotas that discriminated against Jews. From there, under the name Monty Hall, doors opened for him in the United States. The episode that covers Hall (and Alex Trebek) can be streamed at canadasgameshows.com. ■

Compiled by Marc Weisblott of CJN Today, our email newsletter. CJNews.com/today

Gematria

32

The age difference in years between Princess Diana's niece, Lady Kitty Spencer, and her fiancé, Jewish South African fashion tycoon Michael Lewis, who gave her a diamond ring with an estimated value of C$500,000.

0

The number of Academy Awards nominations to date for Adam Sandler, who was snubbed for his leading role in *Uncut Gems*, resulting in the actor expressing relief that he can now "stop wearing suits."

3

The number of Montreal stores that stopped selling Secret Hitler after complaints escalated by B'nai Brith Canada over the board game, which Jewish co-creator Max Temkin designed as a protest against fascism.

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Letters to the Editor

The right side of history

In his portrayal of the progressive Jewish point of view on the two-state versus the one-state solution, it's clear that columnist Michael Diamond supports the far-right narrative against the two-state solution ("Whither the two-state solution?" Comment, Jan. 9).

Yet we should remember that, according to a December 2019 poll on the issue conducted by the Geneva Initiative, a majority of Israelis (57 per cent) still favour a two-state solution, compared to 43 per cent who favour a one-state solution, with or without equal rights for Palestinians. Canadians also support a two-state solution by a vast majority.

David Cohen
Beaconsfield, Que.

Trump apologists

Contrary to what Barbara Kay seems to think, cozying up to populism, nativism and the sulphuric odour that U.S. President Donald Trump exudes personally adds no moral energy whatsoever to anyone's Jewishness or Zionism – or their conservatism, for that matter ("The real sources of Jew-hatred in America," Comment, Jan. 16).

Having returned to Canada after a five-year sojourn in South Carolina, I have had my fill of so-called conservative Jews compromising their Jewish values to support Trump, because they think he's good for the Jewish state. Israel is not strengthened by such people. The wonderful and diverse Chabad Center where I made my Jewish home in Columbia, S.C., was so riven by the Trump issue that the rabbis actually asked us not to discuss politics. Jews not discussing politics and not debating serious questions of moral significance? That in itself was a sign of bad times. *Shalom bayit* at what cost?

The red "Make America Great Again" kippah is a badge of shame for every Jew whose Jewish identity can be so easily co-opted at the cheapest possible price.

Stuart Woolley
Edmonton

Bringing back the children

As part of a commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in the Netherlands, our organization, De Terugkeer van de Joodse Kinderen (The Return of Jewish Children), would like to bring the kids who went into hiding in the province of Friesland during the war back to the country. We are searching for people who, with help from the Amsterdam Student Resistance Group, were either smuggled from a daycare centre opposite the Hollandsche Schouwburg in Amsterdam, or who were taken from their homes by the same group.

A total of 210 children found a hiding place in Friesland. We believe that around 70 of them are still alive and we would like to get in touch with them, to ensure that their important part in history is told and documented for future generations.

For more information, please visit our website at joodsekinderen.nl

Sue Smeding, researcher,
De Terugkeer van de Joodse Kinderen
Leeuwarden, Netherlands

What's that place called?

I believe that the archive photo was misidentified. The restaurant was called Pepio's, not Papio's ("Hockey champions," Jan. 9).

Allen Manly
Thornhill, Ont.

You're already reading The CJN – now you can listen to it. The CJN Podcast Network delivers weekly audio shows straight to your smartphone, computer or tablet. Here's what we're talking about this week:

On this week's episode of The Menschwarmers, hosts Jamie and Gabe dive deep into the new Tim Horton's commercial featuring Wayne Gretzky. They also discuss Jews in the NFL playoffs and Jewish NHL all-stars.

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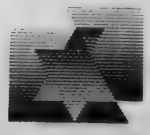

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Rabbi2Rabbi

Sabbatical salutations

Entering their seventh year paired together as CJN pen pals, the rabbis reflect on what they have learned from their partnership in correspondence.

RABBI YAEL SPLANSKY
HOLY BLOSSOM TEMPLE, TORONTO

RABBI MARK FISHMAN
CONGREGATION BETH TIKVAH, MONTREAL

Rabbi Splansky: It's the seventh year since *CJN* editor Yoni Goldstein introduced us and invited us to be writing partners. It has been a pleasure to get to know you through these correspondences and a privilege to share our thoughts with many loyal readers. The finest way to get to know someone is to study together in a *havruta* (learning partnership), to exchange ideas and to discover what we each value most.

The span of seven years calls for a moment to pause and reflect. What have we learned along the way?

Rabbi Fishman: Seven years, wow. That does seem like a long time. We could have started and (almost) finished the *daf yomi* in that period!

I believe the Torah is something a person can have a very serious and close relationship with. In the Hebrew phrase "*Torah tziva lanu Moshe, morasha kehillat Ya'akov,*" we are taught that the Torah that Moses commanded us is the inheritance of the Jewish people.

Interestingly, the rabbis of the Midrash read the word *morasha* as *meorasah*, or a bride who is engaged to soon marry. Indeed, the Torah is a very intimate possession. When we learn it – and especially when we teach it – we express our deepest thoughts and feelings.

Rabbi Splansky: From time to time, readers tell me what they think about our R2R dialogue. They appreciate the content of our exchanges, but more often, they comment on the fact that you, an Orthodox rabbi, and I, a Reform rabbi, seem to enjoy mutual respect for one another.

While I work day and night to serve and strengthen the Jewish people, I simultaneously believe with a perfect faith that the Jewish people is eternal and that its endurance does not depend on me. This trust comes from my belief in God's protection, of course, but it also has a lot to do with my faith in rabbis like you. Knowing that we are working in parallel, drawing our people closer to Torah and mitzvot – each in our own way – gives me confidence in the Jewish future.

Rabbi Fishman: There are times when the Orthodox community tries defining itself based on what it is not. This definition can be helpful at times. After all, we live in a secular time where society's norms and values seem to change as quickly as our technology.

Yet there is a bigger narrative and a greater opportunity at hand, and that is to show the greatness and expansiveness of Judaism. It's true, there are some real red lines where Orthodoxy cannot traverse, but I have always wanted to see what we share in common and how we can both study and learn from each other in a co-operative, as opposed to combative, fashion.

Rabbi Splansky: It's a challenge to write something interesting in just a few short paragraphs. Most Jewish ideas are complex and need time to explore and explain. This forum requires that we choose our words carefully and express a point of view succinctly.

Time and again, it is a text you or I bring that gets to the heart of the matter. I am grateful for the Torah you've taught me through your words and your friendship. Just as the respective seven-day and seven-year cycles of Shabbat and *shemitah* allow people and fields to replenish and refresh, may this seventh year of learning from one another enrich the lives of all who read these lines.

Rabbi Fishman: Learning from you truly has been one of my great blessings. Like any good study partner, you have challenged, pushed and encouraged me to be articulate and clear in the ideas I present. This column has also insisted that we try to be compelling in the views and opinions that we attempt to convey. An open dialogue between two rabbis can easily descend into one-upmanship, yet we have always focused on developing these columns together.

The Maharal compared and contrasted the Torah study of scholars hailing from the Land of Israel with that of scholars in Babylonia. He described the former as those who "argue with calm demeanour," while the latter scholars, in line with the "uneven" quality of Babylonia, tended to study in a far more adversarial fashion.

May the Torah of Israel continue to guide us for another seven years! ■

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UJA Federation of Greater Toronto

A giggle fit ruined my choir debut

The third verse of the second chapter of the Book of Isaiah offers the source for one of Judaism's most enduring expressions: *ki mi-Tzion tetzei Torah, u'devar ha-Shem mi-Yerushalayim* (for the Torah will come forth from Zion, the word of God from Jerusalem). Those words, written in the 8th century BCE (probably by the eponymous prophet, and reproduced in the writings of his contemporary, the minor prophet Micah), echo through the ages, declaring the underlying connection between the Jewish homeland and the Jewish scriptures. It's such a fundamental principle of Judaism that our liturgy cites Isaiah's words each time we remove the Torah from the *Aron Kodesh* (Holy Ark).

Little surprise, then, that the phrase has begat a litany of Jewish songs – in the synagogue, of course, but also in the Zionist setlist. Perhaps you've heard one or more such renditions yourself at a child or grandchild's school choir performance. As a young lad, I myself sang those exact words in precisely such a setting – to hilariously disastrous effect. So when my daughter, who's been getting involved in her school choir, recently asked if I'd ever been in one myself, boy, did I have a story to tell.

It may surprise you to learn that there was a time in the late 1980s and early '90s when my vocal chords were in demand for Jewish choirs of all varieties schools, shuls, camps, you name it. It is especially surprising given the catastrophe of my first foray. On that day, in the school gymnasium, with all the students and parents watching, I stepped to the front of the room. The song was "*Ki mi-Tzion,*" and I sang the solo for "*U'devar ha-Shem mi-Yerushalayim.*"

Well, not really sang. If we're being entirely honest, I actually burst out laughing midway through and didn't even stop when the rest of the class came back in to rescue me. One of my classmates, today a professor of Jewish history south of the border, nudged me from his spot in the line, but to no avail. I was so nervous – I can still remember how nervous I was – that I froze, simple as that. Hey, at least I laughed instead of crying.

> "

But that's only half the reason why the performance maintains legendary status in my family. The other portion comes courtesy of my father, who borrowed a camcorder (my uncle's, if I remember correctly) to record the events for posterity. Not only did he catch my unfortunate maiden gig in all its glory, he somehow managed to compound it. You see, my father had never handled a video recording device before – he only had experience with cameras. You can rotate a camera from a horizontal position to a vertical one, and voilà, you get a different perspective. Same thing with the camcorder, right?

So it was that when the family sat down to watch that dumpster fire of a tape, we found ourselves forced to manipulate our necks in the most unnatural of directions, as the video tilted sideways, then completely upside down. The medium was indeed the message that day.

Amazingly enough, after all was said and done, I actually ended up being in a bunch more choirs – and even managed to get through a couple of solos without giggling – until nature inevitably took its course and I could no longer hit the high notes (or really any notes). Perhaps even more astoundingly, in the intervening years, technology has in fact caught up to my father's vision of how a video recording device ought to operate. ■ — YONI

From the Archives

First Romanian Synagogue

ONTARIO JEWISH ARCHIVES, BLANKENSTEIN FAMILY HERITAGE CENTRE, UJA FEDERATION OF GREATER TORONTO

Adath Israel congregation dates back to 1902, when the first Romanian members of Toronto's Jewish community purchased a sefer Torah and began running services in various locations in the Ward. By 1942, they moved to Bathurst and College streets and soon celebrated the burning of the mortgage at 557 Bathurst St.

SeeJN

Holocaust Forum

YONATAN SINDEL/FLASH90 PHOTO

Preparations at the King David Hotel ahead of a visit of more than 30 heads of state and ministers from around the world as part of the Fifth World Holocaust Forum, which takes place Jan. 23.

Essay

Authentic gravlaks from a 'viking Jewess'

Nina Lichtenstein

I am a convert to Judaism who was born and raised in Norway, before moving to the United States. About a year ago, I had a strange food-writing experience when I worked with an editor at a Maine food magazine. She was a Jewish woman who was interested in what I had to say about a gravlaks recipe she had printed in an earlier issue, since I had a native Norwegian take on it. I suggested some possible alternative ways to prepare the dish. I wrote the essay and included my recipe and tips.

The story of my Jewish journey was also part of the essay, as it is central to my culinary tapestry, just as my Norwegian heritage is. But before the piece went to print, the editor asked me to remove any references to Judaism. "It's our policy to not involve religion," she noted. I was stunned. I decided that if I could not talk about my Jewish identity as freely as I could my Norwegian one, I was not interested in the assignment. Food is, after all, one of the central elements of culture, and if my Jewish culture is not kosher to talk about, then count me out.

My childhood in Norway was teeming with fish in all imaginable varieties. My parents and their friends would often catch and prepare their own cod, salmon, crabs and mussels at various times of the year. I ate five varieties of herring by the time I was three. But then, at the age of 20, I met a Jewish man and fell in love, and at 23, I underwent an Orthodox conversion. Suddenly, all the shellfish traditions of my birth family became off-limits, because I went all in and wanted to be both kosher and *shomer* Shabbat. Thankfully, herring and lox were a big part of my adopted culinary tradition, too.

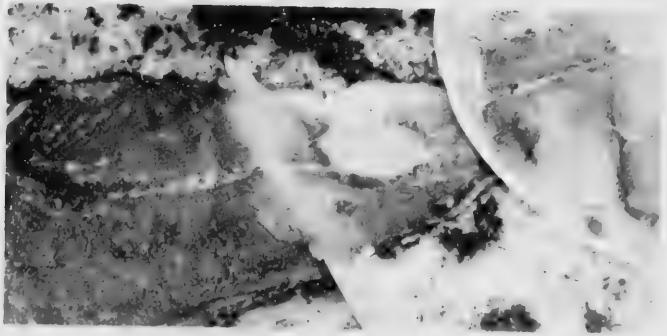
At my oldest son's bar mitzvah, I prepared those five varieties of herring (with tomato sauce; wine sauce; beets, apples and onions; curry sauce; and cream sauce) and cured enough gravlaks in our synagogue kitchen to feed more than 250 people. When guests are coming to my house for a meal on Shabbat or *yom tov*, I often make gravlaks, because it needs to be made ahead of time, which takes some pressure off on the day it's served.

Since I have a penchant for languages and etymologies, the word "gravlaks" calls for a brief note. The suffix "-laks" is the Norwegian word for salmon; while the prefix "grav" means, "to dig," or "grave." In the olden days before refrigeration, the fresh salmon was cured and preserved by being placed in a deep hole in the ground and covered by dirt.

This would help ensure a more stable temperature and, together with the generous amounts of salt, would help preserve the food. Salted and dried cod, lamb ribs, pork and reindeer were all traditionally cured with salt. Furthermore, I travel in circles where the word "lox" is so deeply ingrained by the iconic New York food culture of bagels and lox (as in smoked salmon) that I have spent the last 30 years of my life in the U.S. insisting that "no, it's not like lox." So, as the viking Jewess I am, I must insist: it's gravlaks.

I am definitely a self-professed foodie, and today, more than 28 years after becoming Jewish, my culinary explorations include many Israeli staples and delicacies. But there's still nothing like combining my Norwegian heritage with my adopted Jewish culture when serving home-made gravlaks. ■

Nina Lichtenstein blogs at vikingjewess.com.



Nina's Gravlaks Recipe

- 2.5 kg (5 lb) salmon, divided into two equal fillets with skin on, to be sandwiched for curing period
- 150 ml (10 tbsp) sugar
- 150 ml (10 tbsp) kosher salt
- 75 ml (5 tbsp) peppercorns, slightly cracked with a mortar and pestle
- Fresh dill, to taste
- Brandy or whisky

Mix salt, sugar and pepper in a bowl.

Evenly spread plenty of torn up fresh dill on the flesh side of one of the fillets. Pour spice mixture over it and put second fillet on top, flesh side down.

Wrap salmon tightly in heavy-duty aluminum foil, place in a pan, cookie sheet or platter with a lip (to contain liquid that will seep out during curing) and put something heavy on top of it (I use a brick, but anything works, such as cans of food). Place in the fridge and set a reminder to flip and drain every 12 hours.

Each time you turn the package over, drain off the salty, gooey liquid (brine) that has seeped out into the pan. I also hold the package over the sink to let it drain as much as possible, before returning it to the fridge, flipped over and with the weight back on top. Draining the brine is important, otherwise the gravlaks can become too salty.

After 48 hours, unwrap the fillets and wipe them clean with a wet paper towel. If the spice mixture has caked on during the curing process, run the fillets under cold water and dry with paper towel.

After the fillets have been cleaned, pour some of your favourite brandy or whisky into the palm of your hand and rub it over the fillets. This cuts some of the salty taste and adds an understated and round finish to the fish. For looks, I sprinkle finely chopped dill on the fillets, before slicing them thinly on an angle and arranging them on a platter.

Gravlaks is best served with plenty of lemon wedges and traditional mustard dill sauce (recipe to follow).

Mustard Dill Sauce

- 30 ml (2 tbsp) Dijon mustard
- 15 ml (1 tbsp) sugar
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) white vinegar
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) extra virgin olive oil
- salt
- white pepper
- 30-60 ml (2-4 tbsp) fresh dill, finely chopped

Mix mustard, sugar and vinegar in a small bowl.

While whisking, add olive oil in a fine and constant stream.

Season with salt and white pepper and stir in fresh dill.

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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
JANUARY 23, 2020

FINDING BLACKIE

Unravelling the mystery of a largely forgotten Jewish-Canadian serviceman who died during the Second World War

ELLIN BESSNER
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

A wooden statute shaped like an airplane wing used to sit in a place of prominence at Camp Naivelt, a Toronto-area Jewish summer camp. Camp staff built it over 75 years ago to honour the memory of a beloved sports director who everyone called "Blackie."

He was a Canadian pilot who served with the Royal Air Force (RAF) in the United Kingdom and was killed in action during the Second World War.

According to a book about the camp titled *A Future Without Hate or Need*, the monument to Blackie was built in August 1943 by Sid Dolgoy, who was one of the founding members of the iconic Canadian folk group the Travellers, along with brothers Ben and Hy Chudnovsky and others, and was located beside an outdoor wooden stage.

"I remember the Blackie monument very well," said Martin Schechter, a professor at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver.

The Blackie monument at Camp Naivelt. Family unknown. COURTESY ESTER REITER

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"One thing for certain I remember is that the whole monument was in deep left field of the baseball diamond we used, and any hit to the monument was an automatic home run."

I first learned about the Blackie statute in October 2019, when I was a guest speaker at the Yiddish Vinkl group, which meets each month at the Free Times Cafe in Toronto. Many of its members are alumnae of Camp Naivelt, a historic camp near Brampton, Ont., that opened in the 1930s and is still part of the city's left-wing Jewish secular movement.

No one at Yiddish Vinkl remembered Blackie's real name.

Although I spent years collecting the names and stories of the 17,000 Jewish-Canadians who served in the Second World War for my book, *Double Threat*, I had no listing for him.

Thus began my search. It was suggested that I reach out to Sharon Hampson, one of the stars of the children's singing trio (now duo) Sharon, Lois and Bram, because her family had a cottage near Camp Naivelt. Hampson sent a note out to her Camp Naivelt circle and, with the help of former campers, some answers started to come in.

Jacob Bakan sent a link to a 2008 *Globe and Mail* obituary of Toronto lawyer Murray (Dusty) Cohl. The article says that Cohl got his nickname at Camp Naivelt and that he wasn't the first camper to have that happen – the kids also gave Harris Black the nickname "Blacky."

Frances Blugerman, 102, said that Black was her husband's friend. She recalled that Black joined the RAF in 1940, trained as a pilot and went missing on a return flight from Germany in July 1941. "No one ever found out what happened to him," she said.

A SET OF HOLIDAY PHOTOS

Decorated Toronto veteran Lorne Winer, 102, last saw the man he remembers as Harry Black when the pair shared an unforgettable week's leave in Cardiff during the war.

The two had met in the street in Toronto before they enlisted. Winer said they were "acquaintances," because they had gone to different high schools (Winer went to Central Commerce and Black went to Harbord Collegiate).

"He told me that he was turned down in 1939 for the Air Force here (in Canada) because he was Jewish," Winer said. "He said he was going to work his way over to England on a cattle boat and join the RAF, which in fact he did."

Winer enlisted a year later and arrived in England in December 1940.

Once overseas, Winer wanted to find out what had happened to Black, so he left messages for him at Canada House in London whenever he got leave.

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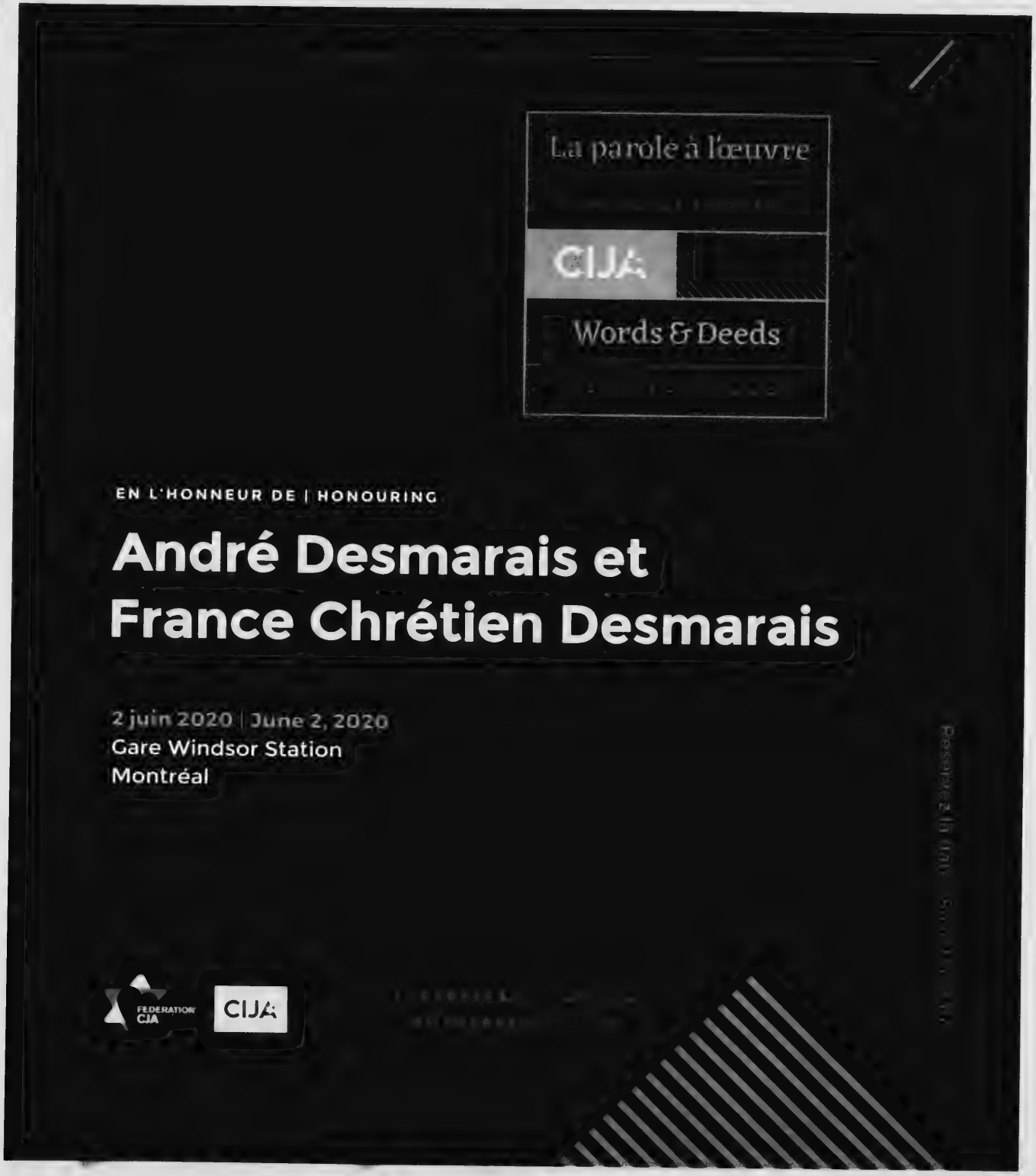
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Adding fuel to the anti-Semitic fire

Bernie Farber

> *When the president of the United States publicly voices such ugly rhetoric, he plants seeds*

Jews are no strangers to anti-Semitism. While history has shown us that Jew-hatred will take the occasional holiday, it has never taken a permanent vacation.

At the end of 2018, the most murderous attack on Jews ever to occur in North America took place at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh. Eleven Jews peacefully at prayer were gunned down by a maniacal white supremacist.

The world was shocked. Jews were horrified. But shocked? Not so much. In the very dark places of our souls, we expect Jews to be attacked. We hope it doesn't happen, but sadly, we are not surprised when it does.

The Jewish community did, however, receive an outpouring of support from all sectors of American society.

"These senseless acts of violence are not who we are as Americans," said Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf.

"Gun violence anywhere is devastating, but to attack people in their place of worship is deeply horrific," claimed Pennsylvania Sen. Jay Costa.

Bishop Edward Malesic of Greensburg, Pa., intoned that, "People of faith should be able to worship God in peace and security. Our sacred places should be free of all violence. May we find a way to respect the lives of one another without resorting to such brutality."

And of course, there was U.S. President Donald Trump's attempt to bring comfort to the bereaved when he noted that, "It's a terrible, terrible thing what's going on with hate in our country, frankly, and all over the world. And something has to be done."

Indeed, something has to be done. As the president of the United States, one would have thought that after this horrendous shooting, he would have shown more care with the words he chooses when speaking about white nationalism, racism, neo-Nazism and anti-Semitism. But that is not his way.

Never mind that following a neo-Nazi march in Charlottesville, N.C., in 2107, Trump intoned the righteousness of both the Nazis and the counter demonstrators, and forget that during the 2016 campaign he told a group of Jewish Republicans, "You're not going to support me because I don't want your money."

As I wrote in the *Toronto Star* last month, "Trump jumped the anti-Semitic shark (when) in an address to the Israel American Council on Dec. 8, Trump invoked the longstanding allegation of Jewish dual loyalty by telling the gathering that 'They don't love Israel enough.'

"As if that were not bad enough, he then played the anti-Semitic canard of Jews and their money, insisting that 'a lot of you are in the real estate business because I know you very well. You're brutal killers, not nice people at all.' He then went on to explain how they must vote for him to protect their assets."

Unlike Barbara Kay, who derided me in last week's *CJN* for my criticism of Trump, I believe that when the president of the United States publicly voices such ugly rhetoric, he plants seeds in the minds of those who are already prone to Jew-hatred. As a result, such haters feel they are given permission to move from expressions of anti-Semitism to outright violence.

And so, as 2019 came to a close, American Jews had another abrupt wake-up call. On Dec. 12, two violent anti-Semites invaded a kosher supermarket in New Jersey and murdered three Jews and a police officer.

And on the last night of Hanukkah, a violent Jew-hating marauder forced his way into the home of a local rabbi, where he too tried to murder Jews with a machete. Three were wounded, one seriously. Anti-Semitic literature was seized from his car and his home.

Where in the past those with hateful feelings towards Jews might spray paint a synagogue or use social media to express their demonic thoughts, today, given that, in their minds, the president of the United States shares their views, they may feel that more drastic measures can be taken.

Trump certainly did not plant a gun or machete in the hands of the perpetrators, but he may very well have added fuel to the anti-Semitic fire. ■

Get a say in Israel's elections with targeted donations

The single most effective educational intervention in the world of Jewish identity in the 21st century is Birthright Israel, Gil Troy writes. FLASH90 PHOTO

Gil Troy

Although it's not too late for a Jew to hop on a plane, make aliyah and vote in Israel's upcoming election, there are other, easier ways to participate in Israeli politics. Diaspora Jews can "vote" with donations, expressing their feelings through charitable contributions, and – when done strategically and generously, – change history.

There are many excellent organizations working to fulfil the Zionist dream in Israel. But considering the burning issues in this election, these organizations reinforce my vote.

Here's what I seek in a candidate: someone who keeps Israel safe while improving its relations with our Arab neighbours; who counteracts the harm the chief rabbinate does, while fighting to expand religious freedom and the quality of Jewish life; who is honest and defends democracy; who will deliver quality education; and who will unify the Jewish people, bridging the gap between Israel and the Diaspora.

On security, the website of Friends of the IDF is a go-to address for those who wish to help Israeli soldiers currently serving, as well as injured veterans. It's quite moving when you visit some remote army base and you see gym equipment donated by a family from abroad. You can also go more informal by finding a kid who is serving and offering to cover a pizza party or some other treat for his or her unit. Remember, these are young people – a generous freebie from abroad is a big thrill for them.

For those of us disgusted by the occasional goons who harass Arabs, imposing "price tag" attacks on homes, cars and sometimes humans, Tag Meir is the perfect response. A clever, redemptive twist on *tag mechir* (Hebrew for "price tag"), every dollar donated to this anti-bigotry coalition advocates for co-existence and against hooliganism. Talk about money well spent.

When it comes to religion and state issues, my favourite organization fighting the good fight is Tzohar. This group of rabbis started simply by trying to improve the quality of pastoral services at the Israeli wedding. Tzohar has expanded and expanded, taking on important projects to make it easier to convert, more meaningful to pray and less alienating for secular Jews to handle the Jewish state's Jewishness.

In the fight against corruption and for democracy, I lean towards the intellectual, I confess.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

“

[redacted]

But almost every time I read something intelligent about the attempt to cleanse, improve and perfect Israeli democracy, I encounter the same organization: the Israel Democracy Institute. The IDI stands for integrity, good process and a moral and intelligent approach to many political problems.

Regarding education, I invest in two institutions that worked brilliantly for my children: the Shalom Hartman Institute's boys high school and the Israel Arts and Science Academy. Both of these institutions do a great job of sharpening students' minds, but even more importantly, the extraordinary educators involved help stretch students' souls. You can't ask for much more than that, especially in high school.

Finally, the single most effective educational intervention in the world of Jewish identity in the 21st century is also the single most effective bridge-builder between Israel and the Diaspora: Birthright Israel. We tend to focus on how much that free trip to Israel did for our kid, our nephew or our neighbour. But multiply that by 750,000 and counting. Imagine what it's been doing for us, the Jewish people.

Making this list is so easy, yet so frustrating. It's easy because each organization is world-class and deserves full support, but frustrating because so many other worthy candidates are doing great work, too.

When it comes to voting, you're allowed one vote per election. But when voting-by-giving, you can follow the advice of the old corrupt Chicago politicians – vote early and vote often! ■

Do you disagree with our columnists? Have your say by writing to **cjninfo@gmail.com.**

The benefits of 'performing Jewishness'

SHUTTERSTOCK PHOTO

Sara Horowitz

Recent verbal and violent acts of anti-Semitism have many people evaluating how openly they want to display their Jewishness. Responding to reports that many Jewish people in North America and Europe have gone "underground" and concealed public displays of Jewishness, my colleague, historian Deborah Lipstadt, has initiated what she's termed #OperationMagen David, promoting the wearing of a Jewish star as a public affirmation of Jewish identity.

I understand how fear drives people underground. Several years ago, on a visit to Barcelona, my husband and I were leaving our hotel to explore the city when the doorman stopped us. I was carrying a canvas tote bag from an exhibition on windows at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem that bore the silhouette of a cat on a window sill and the name of the museum in Hebrew.

"I have nothing against this personally," the doorman told us, gesturing to the lettering, "but if you wander into certain areas of town carrying it, you might get roughed up." We left the bag behind, exchanging it for a more anodyne one.

But it's one thing to act with caution on a short-term basis on unfamiliar turf. It's another thing to let fear govern at home.

Before moving to Toronto, I taught at a university in the United States with few Jewish students. One of my graduate students had an unmistakably Jewish surname. But she wasn't Jewish – except when she sort of was. She was born to a Jewish father and a Catholic mother, and knew that she would not be considered halakhically Jewish except within the Reform movement, which recognizes patrilineal descent.

She felt close to her Jewish grandparents, related positively to her Jewish heritage, but did not identify as Jewish – except when someone made an anti-Semitic remark in her company. Then she would look straight at that person and say, "I'm Jewish, you know."

She called this "performing Jewishness." In using that expression, she did not mean to suggest that there was something false about declaring herself Jewish. She understood that most of us have a complex and multifaceted sense of who we are. We might think of ourselves as some mixture of Canadian, American, French, Jewish, man, woman, married, single, divorced, straight, gay, childless, a mom, a dad, a lawyer, a teacher, a businessman and so forth. In particular contexts, one strand or another comes to the forefront. If, in a given situation, it is important to us that others know this aspect of who we are, we "perform" that aspect of our identity – by what we say, what we wear or how we speak.

The idea of performance implies that we have a choice in how others perceive us. We can opt to signal our Jewishness or not.

My father, who taught in inner-city schools in New York, wore cufflinks in the shape of the Hebrew word *chai*. When his students – mostly African-American or Latino – noticed them, they would mistake the Hebrew letter *het* for a more familiar symbol that seemed appropriate for their math teacher. "Oh, Mr. Horowitz," they would say to him, "that's so cool – you have cufflinks with pi." Depending on the student, and his relationship with him or her, my father might take the opportunity to explain what *chai* stood for, and perhaps how his own experience of Jewish quotas motivated his commitment to teaching students challenged by poverty and racism.

Notwithstanding the horrific attacks against Jews, most Jews today have the luxury of deciding when and how to "perform Jewishness." You can wear six-pointed stars, chais, hamsas or other Jewish symbols. You can wear kippot or other religious garb. You can carry books in Jewish languages or with Judaic titles. Like my student, you can call out anti-Semitism. Like my father, you can explain how Jewish experiences shape you and how Jewish values impel you. There's no Oscar for it, but it may be the performance of a lifetime. ■

News

Groups call for IRGC to be added to terror list

RON CSILLAG

Leaders of the Jewish and Iranian communities have joined forces to demand that Canada add the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) to its list of banned terrorist groups.

At a news conference in Ottawa on Jan. 13, leaders from the Council of Iranian Canadians, the Justice 88 Campaign and B'nai Brith Canada urged the government to implement a motion passed in the House of Commons in June 2018.

The motion, which was approved unanimously, called on Ottawa to designate the IRGC as a terror group. It also strongly condemned Iran for its "ongoing sponsorship of terrorism around the world, including instigating violent attacks on the Gaza border," and for statements "calling for genocide against the Jewish people."

A year later, Canada added two neo-Nazi and three small Iranian-backed groups to its list of banned terrorist organizations, but failed to list the IRGC.

"Our government is now on notice," Michael Mostyn, the CEO of B'nai Brith Canada, told the news conference. "We are asking for the IRGC to be designated as a terrorist group in Canada within the next 30 days. No further delays will be accepted by Canadians on this important public safety issue."

In 2012, the former Conservative government added the Quds Force to the terror list. But B'nai Brith and others complained that the Quds Force was a subgroup of the IRGC and that banning it but not its parent organization would accomplish little.

From left, Reza Banai, chairman of the Justice 88 campaign, Michael Mostyn, CEO of B'nai Brith Canada, Avideh Motmaen-Far, president of the Council of Iranian Canadians, David Matas, legal counsel for B'nai Brith Canada, and Brian Herman, director of government relations for B'nai Brith Canada. PHOTO: [illegible]

"There is no basis in law or in policy for banning the Quds Force while failing to do so for the entire IRGC," said David Matas, legal counsel for B'nai Brith Canada, at the news conference. "Canada has rightly rejected that approach when it comes to other terrorist groups, such has Hezbollah and Hamas."

Funds sent to the IRGC from Canada, which remains legal, could be used to assist the Quds Force in carrying out acts of terrorism, he said. Blacklisting the IRGC would remove a legal obstacle and allow Canadian victims to sue the Iranian government under the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act, Matas added.

Qassem Soleimani, who was assassinated in a U.S. drone strike on Jan. 3, was a major general in the IRGC and commander of its Quds Force.

In an interview with *The CJN*, Conservative MP Garnett Genuis, who introduced the parliamentary motion in 2018, said: "We haven't gotten any explanation from the government as to why they have not moved thus far. We need answers. We need to understand what the government is doing and why."

His theory is that "it looks like a political decision was made not to move forward." When his motion was passed, "they said, 'we're studying it.' They can't very well say they're studying it now."

Genuis noted that his motion received Liberal support. Indeed, the motion also called on the Liberals to abandon promises to restore ties with Tehran, which the Conservative government had cut, and their endorsement was seen as a striking change in Ottawa's Iran policy.

The designation of the IRGC as a terrorist entity is "an urgent matter," Avideh Motmaen-Far, president of the Council of Iranian Canadians, told the news conference.

Since Genuis's motion was passed, "hundreds of Iranians have been murdered just for demanding their basic rights," stated Reza Banai, the chair of the Justice 88 Campaign, a group that pursues accountability from Iran. "The least our government can do is sanction the IRGC, which is responsible for so much misery in Iran and throughout the region."

Canada "has already taken a number of actions" against the IRGC, read a statement sent to *The CJN* from Public Safety Canada.

"We continue to list the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Quds Force as a terrorist entity, and we also continue to impose sanctions on Iran and the IRGC targeting all four of its branches as well as senior-level members of its senior leadership," the statement continued.

The United States listed the IRGC as a terrorist group in April 2019.

Meanwhile, The Canadian Press (CP) quoted Dennis Horak, who was Canada's last ambassador to Iran prior to the severing of diplomatic relations in 2012, as saying that listing the IRGC as a terrorist entity would undermine efforts by the Trudeau government to properly investigate the crash of the Ukraine Airlines flight that was shot down by Iranian missiles over Tehran on Jan. 8.

All 176 people on board were killed, including at least 57 Canadians.

Horak told CP that listing the IRGC would be "counterproductive" because Iranian officials "could believe the accident investigation team is looking to compile evidence for future legal cases against them." ■

Clause banning Jewish buyers 'shocks the conscience'

JANICE ARNOLD
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A clause discriminating against Jews involved in real estate transactions in St-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Que., still existed on paper until very recently.

That fact came to light when a man went to court last year over a matter concerning a property he had owned there since 1994. He was shocked to discover an explicit prohibition on Jewish buyers or renters in that area of the city that was placed in the notarial documents.

The servitude, the legal term for such a condition, was placed by farmer Alphonse Waegener when he sold land in the mid-1960s that was to be subdivided for residential development. Today, there are about 350 houses in that neighbourhood.

The fact that such a clause remained on the books for decades, even though it was unenforceable, was brought to light by the Montreal newspaper *La Presse* on Jan. 14.

It reported on a case that was brought by Carl Nadeau against a developer that had made an offer to buy his property in 2018, but backed out when the non-construction servitude was found.

In December, a Superior Court judge ordered the provincial land registry office to erase the anti-Jewish servitude from its records within 30 days.

Judge Claude Dallaire wrote that such discrimination is prohibited under the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and that earlier court decisions made them illegal well before that.

Dallaire ruled that the two clauses banning the sale or rental of properties to "persons of the Jewish race" are "contrary to public order and must be struck."

She added that their existence "shocks the conscience."

The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA), which says it's the first time it has heard of such a clause still being around in recent memory in the province, is asking the city to rename a street and park that were named after Waegener. Alphonse Waegener died in the 1980s; his son Louis, 99, still lives in St-Jean-sur-Richelieu.

While Nadeau was not aware of the clause, several residents of Waegener Street were, according to *La Presse*.

The Commission de toponymie du Québec records that the street was named in 1989 and the park, which is on that street, got its name 10 years later.

The sun sets on St-Jean l'Evangéliste Cathedral in St-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Que.
PIERRE ROY/A PHOTO

CIJA also denounced Louis Waegener for telling *La Presse* that, "My father was devoted to everyone, but you see, the Jews, they become masters a bit in everything. That's what he didn't like. He had Jewish friends. He didn't want to have any trouble with Canadians."

"CIJA condemns in the strongest terms the anti-Semitic comments made by (Louis Waegener) justifying the discriminatory clause used by his father to prohibit the sale and rental of his lands to Jews," Rabbi Reuben Poupko, CIJA's Quebec co-chair, said in a statement.

"Anti-Semitic and racist clauses, prevalent in the 1950s, have since been invalidated by a Supreme Court decision."

In fact, as early as 1950, the Supreme Court struck down "restrictive covenants" used to keep Jews and other minorities out of specific neighbourhoods.

"In light of this revelation and Mr. Waegener's comments, CIJA calls on the city of Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu to do the right thing and commit to renaming the street and park bearing the Waegener name," said Rabbi Poupko.

On behalf of the city, St-Jean-sur-Richelieu Coun. Maryline Charbonneau said in a Jan. 14 statement that, "We are aware of the sensitivity of this file, which affects the whole Jewish community. We will take the time to check the facts and consult the population on (renaming the street and park)."

St-Jean-sur-Richelieu, which has a population of close to 100,000, is about 40 kilometres southeast of Montreal. ■

Fuller Landau Welcomes Holly Haber and Adam Erlich as Newly Appointed Partners

The New Year brings exciting opportunities - we are thrilled to welcome Holly Haber (US and Cross-Border Tax) and Adam Erlich (Corporate Restructuring and Insolvency) as the most recent additions to the Fuller Landau partnership team

Please join us in congratulating Holly and Adam. Here's to great things ahead!

Holly can be reached at **hhaber@fullerllp.com** and Adam can be reached at **aerlich@fullerllp.com**.

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TDSB plans wide-ranging Shoah education

CJN STAFF

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) is gearing up for Liberation75, which is billed as a "global gathering of Holocaust survivors, descendants, educators and friends," to take place at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre from May 31 to June 2.

As a participating sponsor of Liberation75, the TDSB's Jewish heritage committee "is committed to Holocaust and genocide prevention education over the next school year and beyond," reads a TDSB press release.

Things will kick off on Jan. 27, International Holocaust Remembrance Day, with the "One Book Event" that will feature *Hana's Suitcase*, the award-winning true story of Hana Brady, a young Jewish girl from Czechoslovakia who was murdered at Auschwitz, along with most of her family.

In partnership with Indigo Books and Music and Second Story Press, all of the nearly 18,000 Grade 6 students across the TDSB will receive a copy of *Hana's Suitcase*. The book "is an excellent resource for introducing children to the Holocaust," the board says. It is Canada's most awarded children's book, has been translated into more than 40 languages, was turned into a stage play and is the subject of a prize-winning radio documentary and feature-length documentary film.

The launch will take place at 10 a.m. at TDSB headquarters (5050 Yonge St.) on Jan. 27, which also marks the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. The event will feature Indigo founder and CEO Heather Reisman and Lara Hana Brady, Hana Brady's niece and the keeper of family artifacts, including some that belonged to Hana. It will be streamed live to all Grade 6 classes across the system. May or John Tory is also expected to attend.

TDSB students in Grade 6 are also invited to submit individual or group art projects to showcase what they learned from reading *Hana's Suitcase*. Students may submit poems, short stories, songs, sculptures, paintings, a suitcase filled with artifacts or letters written to Hana Brady or the book's author, Karen Levine. Selected projects will be displayed during Jewish Heritage Month in May and during Liberation75.

The TDSB's 110 high schools will experience *The Last Goodbye*, an award-winning, virtual-reality film that transports viewers inside the Nazi death camp Majdanek in Poland with Toronto survivor Pinchas Gutter, the only member of his family of four who survived the Holocaust. Since its 2017 debut at the Tribeca Film Festival, this 17-minute film, produced in association with the University of Southern California's Shoah Foundation, has achieved critical acclaim and won numerous awards.

It will be housed at Oakwood Collegiate Institute from February until May and will bring thousands of Grade 10 students, and some in the Grade 11 genocide course, there on field trips to participate in the experience. Students will also be provided a copy of Gutter's memoir, *Memories in Focus*.

Finally, the TDSB has launched a Holocaust and Genocide Prevention Education website for teachers that highlights a selection of French and English Holocaust and genocide prevention educational resources curated by the Jewish heritage committee. It includes material selected from FAST: Fighting Anti-Semitism Together and the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre.

The lessons touch on learning about prejudice, human rights and social justice with the intention of helping students in grades 9 to 12 learn to speak out and make a difference.

Resources for teaching tolerance and kindness in primary grades are also on the website, along with materials and programs for other Jewish heritage committee initiatives.

In addition, the Jewish heritage committee, which is comprised of about 70 staff members, is working with other TDSB heritage committees on joint projects throughout the year to provide more Holocaust and genocide prevention learning opportunities for students. ■

המרכז הרפואי תל-אביב ע"ש סוראסקי
רפואה מובילה ואנושית

The Management of Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center
and the Association of Friends
of Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center
extend sincere condolences to **Jonathan Kolber**
and your family
on the passing of your father

Senator Leo Kolber, z"l

May you be comforted among all the mourners
of Zion and Jerusalem.

Prof. Ronni Gamzu, General Director,
Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center

Vered Roth, CEO of the Association
of Friends of Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center

Board Members of the Association of Friends and the Medical Center

CANADIAN FRIENDS OF THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM
LES AMIS CANADIENS DE L'UNIVERSITÉ HÉBRAÏQUE DE JÉRUSALEM
האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
and
Canadian Friends of the Hebrew University

wish to express our heartfelt condolences on the passing of

Andrew Harper z"l

A wonderful philanthropist,
he will be remembered for his many acts of generosity,
including the establishment of the Carole and Andrew Harper
Research Complex in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
at the Institute for Medical Research Israel-Canada.

May his memory always be for a blessing.

Professor Asher Cohen
President, The Hebrew University

Monette Malewski
National Chair, CFHU

Ari Brojde
Montreal President, CFHU

Rami Kleinmann
President & CEO, CFHU

Debbie Dankoff
VP Development, CFHU

Sinai Health honours the memory of
Marvelle Koffler z"l

Marvelle Koffler *z"l* was a true visionary. Shortly after her own diagnosis of breast cancer a quarter century ago, she and her family established the Marvelle Koffler Breast Centre at Mount Sinai Hospital.

It was the first truly multidisciplinary breast centre in Canada, with a focus on patient comfort coupled with excellence in care. Since its opening, there have been almost one million patient visits, each visit in an environment of comfort and caring.

Marvelle and her beloved husband Murray *z"l* also established an endowed Chair in Breast Cancer, amongst other endowments and facilities that continue to support patients to this day at Mount Sinai Hospital.

We extend our deepest condolences to the entire family and will continue to cherish her legacy.

May her memory be a blessing.

To make a gift in memory, please visit
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Sinai Health

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Halifax welcomes stranded El Al passengers on Shabbat

JOEL JACOBSON
ATLANTIC CORRESPONDENT HALIFAX

When El Al Flight LY26 from Newark was forced to make an emergency landing in Halifax on Jan. 9, many were reminded of the situation faced by air travellers diverted to Atlantic Canada after 9/11, which was immortalized in the hit musical *Come From Away*.

Smoke was detected in the plane's cockpit about 90 minutes after takeoff, while travelling over the Atlantic, and the captain diverted the plane to Halifax Stanfield International Airport, where they landed at about 11 p.m.

Unable to depart the next day because Shabbat would have arrived before the flight could make it to Tel Aviv, the passengers spent almost 48 hours in the Nova Scotia capital.

The experience was described by many as memorable and uplifting, as about 150 passengers and crew were welcomed by the Halifax Jewish community.

Bassie Feldman, the wife of Chabad Rabbi Mendy Feldman, was called by El Al personnel when the Boeing 777 landed. "They asked if I could help find accommodations and make food arrangements for some of the people," she told *The CJN* on Jan. 11, after the flight left Halifax.

"We realized the stranded passengers would be anxious and wanted to make them as comfortable as possible. We wanted to show Chabad and Maritime hospitality."

Many visitors experienced a Friday night Shabbat dinner and post-Shabbat services lunch on Saturday at Bet Chabad, near the Lord Nelson Hotel, which found about 70 rooms for the guests, and Beth Israel Synagogue. After hearing about the stranded passengers on Friday, several women from Beth Israel congregation prepared extra food for Saturday's Kiddush.

Lili, from New Jersey, who didn't want her last name used, was travelling to visit family in Israel. She said the pilot kept them well informed about the situation.

"Passengers who didn't know each other started talking and became like family. There were young children and older people, and everyone in between, all being taken care of. We knew El Al would do anything they could to help. They flew staff from Newark to help us through the weekend."

Lili was flying with her daughter, Nicole, 19, who was travelling to visit friends in Israel. Nicole helped amuse the younger children while arrangements were being made for accommodations.

"They gave us three hotel options, two near the airport, and the Lord Nelson downtown, which was convenient for those wanting to celebrate Shabbat at shul and Chabad. The Halifax Jewish community who helped us was very inspiring, working hard to make us comfortable," said Nicole.

Montrealers gather kosher food to send to Halifax to help feed the stranded passengers from El Al Flight LY26.

Lili added that, "Travelling in these circumstances with Nicole makes this *our* story, a mother-daughter story we will never forget."

Roni Sinai of Teaneck, N.J., was one of six men who walked to Beth Israel Synagogue for Saturday services. "The pilot didn't take any chances. He was very professional and kept us informed," he said.

Varda Avram, Eran Aloni and Muzi Haddad were all returning home to Israel after visiting family in the United States.

Aloni said that when they first realized something was wrong with the plane, it was "a little tense ... but the captain was very friendly, informative and encouraging. The whole crew was co-operative."

Avram enjoyed the brief stay in Halifax. "We saw the city. Some of us even went to Peggy's Cove (a standard tourist highlight of the area.) The Shabbat dinner at Chabad was wonderful. They even brought food from Montreal for us," Avram said.

Bassie Feldman said she was told a "small number" would be coming to dinner, but when she found out that about 40 people would be attending, things became a bit more stressful.

"The day was short, with Shabbat starting around 4:30 p.m. In Halifax, it is difficult to find the volume of kosher food for that number, and the chicken would be frozen and wouldn't thaw in time to cook. A group in Montreal was able to find extra food for us there and ship it to Halifax in time," she said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

Village Shul's rabbi leaving after 40 years

RON CSILLAG
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Rabbi Ahron Hoch

Rabbi Ahron Hoch is careful to point out that he isn't retiring. He's "transitioning to a different stage," and promises that he will still be involved in communal life.

After spending 40 years in Toronto – a biblically significant number – Rabbi Hoch, the senior spiritual leader at the Village Shul and among the five founding rabbis of Aish HaTorah in Toronto, plans to return to his native United States, where he will be a travelling rabbi and a kind of itinerant fixer.

With the death last August of Faigy, his wife of 42 years, Rabbi Hoch moved his departure up by a year. "The time had come to give it over to the next generation," he said.

It was on his watch that Aish HaTorah grew in Toronto, from five families who opened a Jewish learning and outreach centre in a 900-square-foot office at Bathurst Street and Wilson Avenue in 1981, to a powerhouse that has reached thousands with programs, speakers and seminars aimed at strengthening Jewish identity.

By 1988, Aish HaTorah families were holding synagogue services in the home of their rabbi, Yaakov Palatnik, and then in the basement of Beth Lida Synagogue on Gilgorm Road, before winding up for a decade in a former cheese shop on Eglinton Avenue.

It seemed an almost natural culmination when, in 2000, the current Village Shul opened on Eglinton Avenue, with Rabbi Hoch as its spiritual leader. With its heavy emphasis on family oriented programming (the Jewish Family Institute was started by the shul and given to Aish HaTorah to run), the traditional Orthodox synagogue today boasts more than 300 family members. The full name of the distinctive Jerusalem stone building says a lot about its story: the Dan Family Village Shul & Friedmann and Berg Families Aish HaTorah Learning Centre.

Rabbi Hoch rose to become the education director of Aish HaTorah, but becoming the synagogue's rabbi was not in his plans.

"The Village Shul pulpit was not something I sought out," Rabbi Hoch, who turns 65 in April, admitted to *The CJN* in a recent interview. "I was asked, when I was education director of Aish HaTorah to also take on the Village Shul. And so I formed a partnership with the lay community to build something special. We had a vision of trying to build a role model community."

His odyssey began in 1980, when Rabbi Noach Weinberg, the founder of Aish HaTorah, met with Toronto philanthropists Joe and Helen Berman to discuss opening a local branch of the Jewish outreach and learning centre.

One Canadian and four American rabbis took on the job. A native New Yorker not long out of seminary at the time, Rabbi Hoch remembers that upon arriving in Toronto, "I enjoyed the civility and it was a special place, but it did take me a while to understand the mindset of the Jewish Canadian. When we came, we were all in our mid-20s and were very idealistic. We had a dream of creating a renaissance within the Toronto Jewish community."

What struck him as different here was "the concept of learning Torah as a mainstream activity; the concept of relating to Judaism and accessing it as a vehicle of growth on your terms; using your own free will. Those things were very, very foreign."

But there was a hunger for the approach among university students and young professionals, "and that's where our success began. And then eventually, it branched out to marrieds and business leaders. They wanted to build something special for their children, something that was growth-oriented, yet not judgmental, that would be open to people from all walks of Jewish life."

That, he said, translated into the Village Shul's mission statement: to infuse meaning into every ritual and action.

Rabbi Hoch will visit Toronto frequently – two of his seven children live in the city – but he plans to return to the job he started some years ago and has taken to 23 cities in Canada and the United States: that of an independent volunteer who travels to communities to help rabbis, synagogues, lay people and organizations troubleshoot problems, or just improve.

"The idea is to take the 40 years of experience and to share what I've learned, as well as inspire and speak and teach."

He has a departing message for *CJN* readers: "They should understand they have a genius within them and that they can make a huge difference in the world. And the question is just becoming inspired to make the choice to go and actualize their greatness." ■

FRIENDS OF SIMON WIESENTHAL CENTER FOR HOLOCAUST STUDIES

ANNOUNCEMENT

Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center (FSWC) is pleased to welcome philanthropist and business leader, Mr. Fred Waks as the new Chairman of its Board of Directors. Mr. Gerald Schwartz will continue his leadership association with the organization as its Honourary Chairman.

In a statement, Mr. Waks said: "I'm very proud to be a part of one of the world's greatest human rights organizations. To be stepping into Mr. Gerry Schwartz's shoes is a very lofty endeavour. Along with Mr. Avi Benlolo, they have created a world-class institution, which I'm honoured to be affiliated with. Unfortunately, there is much work to be done; however, with great management and a strong board of directors, we will be at the forefront of fighting antisemitism, intolerance and ignorance in Canada and abroad."

"It's an honour and a pleasure to welcome Mr. Waks as Chairman of our Board of Directors. Mr. Waks will be at the forefront of our organization, helping it expand its education and advocacy initiatives over the coming years. We thank Mr. Schwartz for his leadership over two decades and his continued association with the organization," said Avi Benlolo, President and CEO of FSWC.

Fred Waks is President and CEO of Trinity Development. An active community member, Mr. Waks is involved in a number of local charities, including as the outgoing Chair of Sunnybrook Hospital Foundation, Chairman of the Sherman Campus Leadership Committee, Honorary Trustee of the ROM and past Chair of the Jewish Foundation of Toronto.

Contact us today to learn more.

www.friendsofsimonwiesenthalcenter.com | [illegible]

Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies (FSWC) is a non-profit organization dedicated to [illegible] and to promoting the principles of [illegible] and Canadian democracy [illegible]

Koffler pushed boundaries for women's health

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Marvelle Koffler, a passionate supporter of the arts and steadfast advocate for women's health and humanitarian causes, died in her Toronto home on Jan. 14. She was 90 years old.

"A woman of endless grace, Marvelle described her life as magical, adventurous and like a dream," read her death notice. "A woman of vision, Marvelle was committed to pushing the boundaries for the betterment of women's health, the arts and science."

Marvelle and her late husband, Murray Koffler, lent their name, time and money to a variety of causes, including pharmacy management, scientific and medical research, the arts and health programs for aboriginal Canadians.

Among them was the Marvelle Koffler Breast Centre at Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto, which opened in 1995, shortly after Koffler's own diagnosis of breast cancer. It was the first multidisciplinary breast centre in Canada and has seen almost one million patient visits to date. The couple also established the Marvelle Koffler chair in breast cancer at the hospital.

"Her vision and the impact of her generosity has touched so many lives of those receiving and delivering care at Mount Sinai Hospital and beyond," said Gary Newton, president and CEO of Sinai Health.

Murray Koffler – an arts patron, philanthropist, business icon and founder of the Shoppers Drug Mart chain – died in 2017 at the age of 93.

Murray and Marvelle Koffler also established the Koffler Centre of the Arts in 1977, as part of the Bathurst Jewish Community Centre.

Koffler was "a woman of extraordinary kindness and grace who touched many people's lives with her generous spirit and joie de vivre," said Karen Tisch, executive director of the Koffler Centre of the Arts, which is now located on Queen Street West. "Marvelle's vision and commitment were not only instrumental to the success of the Koffler (centre), but also to the flourishing of Jewish arts and culture in Canada."

Koffler also established the International Committee of Women for Science at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel.

With her husband, she established the Toronto Outdoor Art Show and served on the board of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, in addition to many arts councils.

Marvelle and Murray Koffler

Marvelle Seligman was born in Toronto on Feb. 3, 1929, the youngest of four children of Eva, a seamstress who escaped the Russian pogroms, and Irving, a former Talmudic scholar and poet from Rachov, Poland, who toiled as a dressmaker in Spadina Avenue garment shops while building his own coat manufacturing business in Toronto.

Then 20 years old, Murray Koffler was paddling a canoe on Lake Simcoe, in southern Ontario, with a boyhood chum, when he spotted a beautiful girl sunning herself on a raft. He asked to be introduced to "that stunner." Six years later, in 1950, the two were wed.

After Prince Philip was a guest at Jokers Hill, the couple's Ontario equestrian estate, the Kofflers were invited to the 1973 wedding of Princess Anne to Capt. Mark Phillips, and to a party at Buckingham Palace. There, Koffler and Queen Elizabeth engaged in a 15-minute discussion "about you'll never guess – the paper dolls we used to cut out as children," Koffler later recalled. "I told her how I'd cut out and save from girls' cut-out books paper dolls of herself, her sister Margaret and her mom and dad." The Queen's reply was, "I did the same thing."

Koffler was inducted into the Order of Ontario in 1998.

The Kofflers were also founding members of Toronto's Temple Emanu-El.

"Marvelle brought her kindness, wisdom and graciousness into all she did," said the temple's Rabbi Debra Landsberg. "She was truly a marvel – a woman who loved life and shared that joy with all she met. Already, so many and diverse members of this congregation have already begun to share their stories about how she touched them, even in small interactions."

She is survived by her children, Leon, Theo, Tom, Adam and Tiana, 27 grandchildren and one great-grandchild. ■

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Summer camps receive mental health funding

PAUL LUNGEN
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Two years ago, Josh Peppin, the executive director of Camp B'nai Brith near Montreal, had to make a very uncomfortable, though necessary, call to the mother of one of his campers.

The youngster, Peppin notified the mother, told one of the counsellors that before coming to camp, he had contemplated suicide. "The mother thanked me," Peppin recalled. She knew her son had been exhibiting odd behaviours, but did not know why. With the new information in hand, she could now arrange for the proper mental health interventions, Peppin said.

Over the last few years, Peppin has noticed that mental health issues among campers and even staff – have been increasing.

Apparently, that's a trend that is not unique to Camp B'nai Brith. On Jan. 13, the Foundation for Jewish Camp (FJC), a U.S.-based organization, announced that it was awarding grants totalling more than US$1 million ($1.3 million) to 32 Jewish camps throughout North America, to address issues related to mental health.

Camp B'nai Brith will receive a total of US$20,000 in three instalments, as its share of the Yedid Nefesh funding.

Camp Ramah in Canada, the only other Canadian recipient of the funding, will receive the same amount.

According to the FJC, the initiative "addresses the increasing challenges campers and staff face as it relates to MESH (mental, emotional, social health), with a multi-faceted, whole-person approach. Funds will be distributed to help camps hire qualified mental health professionals, and will be directed to counsellor training and wellness programming, such as meditation, yoga and journaling. In addition, a select number of camps will pilot a comprehensive assessment module to assist FJC in developing best practices around policies, procedures and staffing models."

Peppin said the camp is looking to hire a social worker who has worked with children and is comfortable in the outdoors.

There are a number of issues that have arisen at the camp over the last few years, including questions of dieting and eating disorders, sexuality, bereavement and loss.

Last year, "we had three campers who lost parents during the summer," he said.

Rabbi Jordan Bendat-Appell, the director of Camp Ramah in Canada, which is located near Huntsville, Ont., said the camp is in the process of hiring a social worker with a master's degree to work full time on site next summer. The social worker will add to the camp's roster of volunteers and counsellors who work to address mental health issues.

Rabbi Jordan Bendat-Appell

"It's already an area that Camp Ramah takes seriously," Rabbi Bendat-Appell said. "We've had a team of these parent liaisons who support the mental health of campers and staff and work as a bridge between parents and the camp."

Rabbi Bendat-Appell said the addition of someone with a master of social work degree will offer "more robust support for the mental health of our community."

The camp was looking for someone with clinical experience and who could "speak to the best practices in the field," he said.

Like kids at other camps, youngsters at Camp Ramah experience homesickness and there can be tensions between campers and counsellors. In addition, pre-existing mental health issues that can manifest themselves at camp.

By adding a mental health professional, "parents can feel comfortable that their children will be in a more supportive environment, with people trained to respond to the needs of their children," he said.

As part of the Yedid Nefesh program, new hires will travel to Baltimore in March to take part in a "community of practice," to learn about best practices.

According to the FJC, citing research conducted by the National Council of Behavioral Health in the United States, 50 per cent of all cases of mental illness begins by age 14 and 75 per cent by age 24.

Some 90 camps applied for the grants, a response the FJC said "highlights the pressing need for this initiative and indicates a shift in the field of Jewish camping." ■

John Syrtash
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Associate
Garfin Zeidenberg LLP
Family Lawyer & Mediator
for 38 years

Mr. Syrtash is Senior Family Law Associate to Garfin Zeidenberg LLP, celebrating 38 years as a Family Law lawyer this year.

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Answers to pressing questions on Family Law

Family Matters by John Syrtash

Solutions to Parental Child Abduction

The following is a brief summary. For further information consult with Mr. Syrtash

1. Call the Police. Explain the urgency of the abduction and give as much information as needed. Amber alerts are now being made to every cell phone. The success rate has been very high in the jurisdictions where they are used, despite the loud complaints of being woken up in the middle of the night.
2. So, in what situations is an alert not issued involving children? It's common for the Police not to "get involved" if a domestic dispute has triggered the disappearance of a child, particularly when the parent knows where to find the child.
3. A parent left behind can apply to any family law Court in Canada on an emergency basis, and without notice to the other parent, for temporary custody, the child's return and police enforcement.
4. There is a danger of bringing such an emergency motion without notice. If the parent fails to recite facts that are embarrassing to the parent applying, then when a review of the "without notice" Order comes before the Court a few days later and it may set aside its' own Order.
5. If your child has been abducted into the United States there are special procedures. In Ontario, Judges can grant custody to a child and his/her return with *police enforcement*. The police of that State will then enforce the Order virtually anywhere in the United States by American law under something called the *Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act*.
6. If the child is abducted to another Province, the same procedure can be followed i.e. obtain an emergency Custody Order with police enforcement and retain a lawyer in that Province to have it registered in its Court, with the enforcement of the local police.
7. If the child is abducted to a country that has a treaty with Canada for the return of abducted children, then your lawyer will begin enforcement by notifying a Province's office that processes such foreign abduction claims under the *Hague Convention for the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction*. In Ontario you or your lawyer would contact the Ministry of the Attorney General, Central Authority for Ontario for the *Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction*, P.O. Box 600, Steeles West Post Office Toronto, ON M3J 0K8.Tel.: **416-240-2411**, Fax: **416-240-2411** It is also imperative to retain a competent family law lawyer with a great deal of experience in child abduction in both in your home province and in the foreign country where the child was taken. Legal fees for both in and outside of Canada *together* will cost between **$25,000-$35,000**. Be careful: any application under the Hague Convention must be filed within one year of the child abduction.
8. Where a child is abducted to a country that is not a member of the Hague Convention your lawyer will obtain an Order to return the child from a local Court and send a certified copy to a foreign lawyer who is highly competent to prosecute such claims in that country. You may be confronting a Foreign Court jealous of children who may have dual citizenship and you may even face corruption, especially in countries like Mexico, Japan and the Arab world.

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Sponsored by the Community for Jewish Culture of B'Nai Brith Canada.

York reinstates Herut, Students Against Israeli Apartheid

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On Jan. 13, York University announced it was restoring full privileges to Herut Canada and Students Against Israeli Apartheid (SAIA), two student groups that were suspended following a violent protest last November.

The school rescinded certain privileges of the two groups, such as the ability to set up tables and host events on campus, on Dec. 6. The suspensions were in response to the events of Nov. 20, when SAIA protesters and pro-Israel counter-protesters clashed outside a Herut event.

York restored the privileges after the two groups committed to uphold the school's "policies, procedures and principles to protect the safety and rights of students, faculty and staff," the school said in a statement.

Those commitments came following separate discussions with the groups that were facilitated by independent third-party mediator Bob Bordone, whom the statement described as "a highly respected senior fellow at Harvard Law School who founded and directed the Harvard Law School Negotiation and Mediation Clinical Program."

Lauren Isaacs, the Toronto director of Herut Canada, said the facilitated meeting was "a step that we never should have had to take." Now that the group's privileges have been reinstated, she said it doesn't plan on doing anything differently and has already applied to run more events.

Isaacs also discussed what she would like to see from SAIA going forward.

"Every group has the right to protest. But they do not have a right to disrupt, threaten, intimidate and scare and harm our participants. So if they would like to protest, I would like them to do it far away from us and be respectful in doing it and not disrupt our events and shut down free speech just because they have a difference of opinion," she said.

SAIA did not respond to a request for comment, but it did post a statement on its website after its privileges were restored, saying that, "As a result of the facilitated discussion, both York University's administration and SAIA York re-affirmed their commitment to abide by four principles set out by York University president Rhonda Lenton. Those principles relate to campus safety, respect for diversity and free speech and group and individual responsibility.

"SAIA York has always been committed to those principles and will continue to uphold them."

York is conducting an internal review of the events of Nov. 20 and has hired former Supreme Court justice Thomas A. Cromwell to perform an external review. The university said it may take further action with Herut and SAIA based on the findings and recommendations of the two inquiries. ■

Halifax Jews aid travellers

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

She and her husband did the cooking and setting up for the dinner. "Everyone pitched in later to help clean up," she said. "It was very *hamish*, like everyone was family. It was warm, welcoming, beautiful and inspiring. There was singing and dancing, a feeling of great camaraderie.

"One woman was moved to tears, telling me how grateful she was for the effort we put in for them."

On the plane ride to Israel, one of the passengers, Barry Schechter, wrote a note to the Feldmans, thanking them for "your incredibly gracious, generous and heartfelt hospitality in Halifax. I know I speak for all of us when I say we quite literally could not have made it through Shabbat without you."

In a twist of fate, he noted that he and his wife were on their way to visit their twins in Israel, who were born on Sept. 11, 2001, "which is why I was not at the World Trade Center that day." ■

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'He said he was a dead man'

The Wall of Honour at Harbord Collegiate Institute, Toronto. ELLIN BESSNER PHOTOS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

"You put down your name, rank, serial number and military address to let anybody know, 'I'm here and this is how you get in touch with me.' Every time I went to London, I kept looking for Harry Black," Winer said. "But I couldn't find him."

At the time, Winer was in the artillery, stationed near London. Black was an RAF pilot flying nightly raids at the helm of a Whitley bomber out of RAF Leeming with No. 10 Squadron. The base was in Yorkshire.

Yet fate would intervene to reunite the pair. Winer received an invitation from a successful Jewish furrier who lived in Cardiff. He didn't remember the man's name, but remembers that he sent his family to Toronto to escape the war, and that's where the furrier's wife met Winer's mother. Addresses were exchanged and eventually the furrier contacted Winer and invited him to meet for tea at the Cumberland Hotel in London.

"I joined him there and he identified himself. And whom does he have in tow? Harry Black! I couldn't believe it," Winer recalled. The furrier was taking Black back to Cardiff for a week's vacation and they invited Winer to join.

There was plenty of room for the Canadians in the furrier's six-bedroom home, since his wife and four children were in Canada.

Winer and Black spent time at the seaside resort of Porthcawl and snapped numerous photos, including one of Black dressed in white pants, a white open-necked shirt and a linen jacket.

Another of Winer's photos shows Black posing with the furrier's Welsh neighbours. The woman is smiling, but Black looks serious. "The entire week, there's Harry Black, who was a happy guy, who'd smile and so on, a handsome boy, down in the dumps ... fearful of what would happen if he were captured by the Germans," Winer said.

Black told Winer he had already changed his dog tags to ones stamped "OD" for other denominations, rather than the "H" for Hebrew. Winer remembers Black predicting that he was not going to survive the war.

"He kept saying to me he's not going to make it back. All his colleagues had been killed and he kept repeating that to me the entire time. He said he was a dead man," Winer said. (No. 10 Squadron lost nearly 1,000 crewmen in the war.)

Black had already survived a harrowing raid in May 1941, while bombing Hanover. His plane was dropping bombs when it became coned, or trapped, by a group of German anti-aircraft searchlights. Being silhouetted in the light made the Whitley an easy target and German night fighters moved in to attack, strafing the plane with bullets. Black was listed as the second pilot on board. While wartime reports don't say who was at the controls, they managed to make it safely back to base.

After Winer and Black thanked their host in Cardiff and returned to duty, Winer sent the vacation photos to be developed, which he said took a long time. When he got them, he mailed them to Black's base.

"The letter came back to me, 'Missing in Action,' and that was the end of Harry. That's my story of Harry Black and it's a very sad story," Winer said.

While Winer is certain their Cardiff trip happened in 1943 and that his friend went by the name Harry, not Harris, British wartime records show a Canadian pilot named Sgt. Harris Black serving with the RAF. The National Archives lists Black's final mission as taking place in July 1941 – a full two years earlier.

Black's four-man crew was sent out at 10:42 p.m. on July 7, 1941, to bomb Osnabruck and the railway yards. According to Harris' file, their plane was last heard from six hours later. The bomber is presumed to have crashed into the sea off the east coast of England, while en route back to the base.

The government reported pilot Black and the other three crewmen all as officially missing in August 1941.

Black has no known grave, but he is commemorated, along with 20,000 other missing Allied aircrew, at the Runnymede Memorial in Surrey, England.

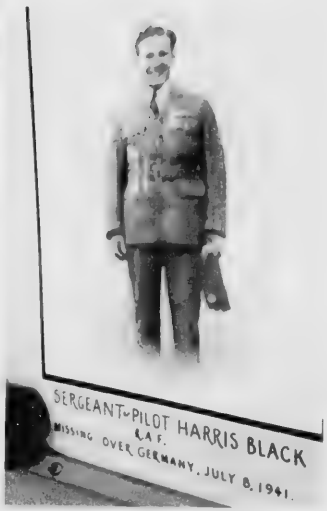
After the war, Winer sent his vacation photos to Black's family in Toronto, but he never heard from them and doesn't know if the letter was ever received. As to whether Black is the same man who went to Camp Naivelt, Winer isn't sure.

What Winer does remember is that his friend's father ran a millinery store.

The 1940 Might's Toronto City Directory (a type of phone book) does indeed list a Barnett Black, who owned Black and Cairn Millinery and lived at 194 Concord Ave. with a Harris Black, who's listed as having been employed as an office clerk with the Adam's Furniture Company.

THE HARBORD WAR MEMORIAL

The walls of the Memorial Hall at Harbord Collegiate high school are lined with double rows of framed black and white portraits. They show former students in their military uniforms who were killed during the First and Second World Wars. A photo of Sgt. Pilot Harris Black is located just outside the auditorium doors. It bears the inscription "Missing Over Germany," and the date July 8, 1941. With his high forehead, prominent smile and wavy brown hair parted to the left, he looks like the pilot who is posing in the photo that Winer took in Cardiff.



Harris Black memorial at Harbord Collegiate Institute.

Another photo, this one at Harbord's in-school museum, shows a student named Harris Black, with the word "Blackie" on the caption, wearing a suit and posing with a young woman on his arm. It was taken at a school track and field event. The person in the photo also looks exactly like the pilot in Cardiff.

Graduation programs for the years 1937 and 1938 have a Harris Black's name on the list, showing that he finished his required four years at Harbord and went on to complete Grade 13, though his grades weren't great.

Entries in the school's yearbook during the late '30s list a player named Black on the junior rugby team during the 1935-36 school year. An H. Black took first-place honours for the under-17 age group in the city high school track meet in 1937 in discus throwing, pole vaulting and shot put. It makes sense that he could have been hired as the sports director for Camp Naivelt.

Close to 700 students and staff from Harbord served in the war. There are 52 names of those who did not come back – including Harris Black – engraved on a stainless steel sculpture outside the school. The Harbord Club's busy alumnus group raised the funds and commissioned fellow graduate Murray Katz to design it. Of the names on the H-shaped structure, more than half are Jewish students.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

'We share his grief'

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

"People said Jews didn't fight for their country," said Murray Rubin, 89, explaining one of the motivations for his Harbord Club undertaking the sculpture project, even though more than six decades had passed since the end of the war.

At that time, "about 85 per cent of the school was Jewish," Rubin said.

The unveiling ceremony in 2007 attracted a lot of media attention and one sister, who is believed to be Blackie's next of kin, showed up.

"I remember that when the memorial to the students of Harbord who died in the WW2 was dedicated I saw Maxine (formerly Black) there crying," wrote Cheryl Tallan, a former Naivelt camper and Jewish history academic in Toronto. "I think that she lived out of town because I hadn't seen her for many years and I haven't seen her since."

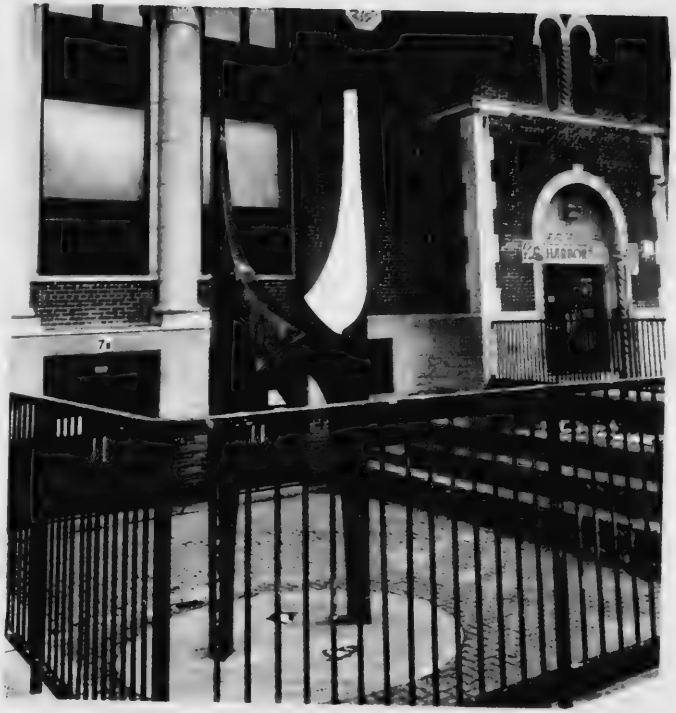
"THEY WERE FIGHTING FOR US"

It would mean a lot to Lorne Winer to find his friend's relatives, even after all this time. In the meantime, the hunt for Blackie has led to a bit of closure, of sorts.

An email request I sent to the small Jewish community of South Wales looking for the name of the wartime Jewish furrier was successful. Tony Blasebalk, who is in charge of the Jewish burial board of the Cardiff United Synagogue, tracked down the family, named Dubow, who had sent a wife and children to Canada during the war. The furrier's only remaining child, Leslie Dubow, is a retired lawyer who lives in London.

Dubow recalls being seven, and sick with the measles, when his determined mother, Jeannie, wrapped him in a blanket and boarded a ship in Liverpool in the summer of 1940, together with her three other children, and departed on a perilous journey across the Atlantic.

"We were refugees in 1940 when it looked like Hitler would invade," said Dubow, 86, in a telephone interview. His father, Harold Dubow, then 53, remained in Cardiff, continuing to run his fur wholesaling factory. He also served as a warden in the country's Air Raid Precaution force.



Memorial at Harbord Collegiate to staff and students who died in the Second World War.

Leslie Dubow remembers his mother being unhappy in Toronto, as money was very tight and she had no close family there. She made some friends in a ladies' knitting circle, which is where he believes she likely met Winer's mother and sent his address on to her husband.

The Jewish community in Wales opened their homes to visiting Jewish personnel stationed in the area, according to Dubow. He doesn't remember specifically hearing about Lorne Winer or Harry Black, but he knows his family home would have had many bedrooms to spare when he was in Canada. Winer confirmed that they and the furrier were alone in the house.

In July 1943, Dubow's mother decided she had had enough of Toronto and somehow brought the kids back home to Cardiff, dodging German spies in Spain and surviving two air raids along the way. When they arrived back in Wales, Dubow clearly remembers his family opening their home to deployed Jewish servicemen.

"I can remember Americans and Canadians coming Fridays for Shabbat," Dubow said. "A couple of them gave me candy."

As to why his father would have gone out of his way to host Winer and Black, Dubow emphatically stated that, "The country was at war and they were fighting for us, so we had a duty to look after them."

The story of his father's kindness to two Jewish-Canadian men who had volunteered to protect England certainly struck a chord with Dubow. It was especially meaningful when he learned how his childhood home was the last place that Lorne Winer would see his friend Black.

"Tell Lorne we share his grief," Dubow said.

Dubow was able to deliver that message to Winer personally, when I helped them connect by telephone. ■

The hunt for Blackie is not over. Anyone with information can contact Ellin Bessner at ebessner@gmail.com. Bessner is a journalism professor at Centennial College and the author of Double Threat: Canadian Jews, the Military and WWII. Special thanks to those who assisted in the research, including British historian Martin Sugarman, Joey Jacobson's War author Peter J. Usher, Sharona Brookman, Ester Reiter, Jacob Bakan, Sol Hermolin, Bev Freedman and Jackie Kay of the High Wycombe Society in the U.K.

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INTERNATIONAL

Analysis

Breaking political promises could end the stalemate

Jacob Magid
JERUSALEM

Israelis have been witness to a strange phenomenon over the past year: politicians, for the most part, have kept their word.

What would have been an honourable proposition in any other scenario has emerged as a problem in Israel's political arena, where it has produced a year-long deadlock of historic proportions, as lawmakers have refused to break campaign trail promises in the name of coalition-building and compromise.

But if the frantic 11th hour negotiations ahead of last week's party-filing deadline demonstrated anything, it is that this uncanny principled period appears to be at an end.

This message was perfectly captured by Jewish Home Chairman Rafi Peretz, who on Jan. 15, tweeted "My word is my bond" to demonstrate his resolve on honouring his merger agreement with the far-right Otzma Yehudit party, despite mounting pressure from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other right-wing officials.

Well, three minutes of resolve, at any rate, after which point he deleted the tweet.

Two hours later, Peretz's name was already listed in the number two spot on the Yamina alliance submitted to the Central Elections Committee, which included his party, but not Otzma Yehudit.

The about-face from Peretz can certainly be cause for cynicism, and the reasoning behind it could be chalked up purely to a desire for political survival; but with virtually every poll predicting that the March 2 vote will leave Israel in the same deadlock that has plagued the country for over a year, such double crosses – as ugly and embarrassing as they may be – will likely be crucial in forming the next government and preventing a fourth straight election.

Peretz was not the first politician to use the phrase "My word is my bond." The saying has long been the party slogan of Avigdor Liberman's Yisrael Beytenu.

Liberman was mocked for it after failing to assassinate Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh 48 hours after becoming defence minister in 2016 – something he had famously promised to do. But since last April's election, many lawmakers, and particularly Netanyahu, have come to once again believe the secular, right-wing leader means what he says.

From left, Gesher party Leader Orly Levy, Labor party Leader Amir Peretz and Meretz party Leader Nitzan Horowitz meet in Tel Aviv on Jan. 20. FLASH90 PHOTO

In April, Liberman promised he would not join any government that didn't pass an ultra-Orthodox conscription law that was an identical version to the one advanced by the previous Knesset. Netanyahu sought to tinker with the legislation in order to reach a compromise with the ultra-Orthodox factions, but Liberman stuck to his guns and refused to budge in a move that forced a second consecutive election.

Before and after the September vote, he made clear that the only coalition he would be interested in joining was a liberal, secular unity government with Netanyahu's Likud and Benny Gantz's Blue and White. Liberman has said that both parties offered him the most senior of positions in an effort to entice him to join a coalition without the other, but he refused every offer, forcing Netanyahu and Gantz to look elsewhere for coalition partners.

For Likud, that meant placing its sights on the more left-wing Labor party to reach a 61-seat majority in the Knesset.

After the April election, Netanyahu offered then-Labor head Avi Gabbay the senior defence and treasury posts. Gabbay briefly considered the offer, which he had vowed throughout the campaign to never entertain. However, colleagues got word of the back-door talks, and Gabbay was forced to walk away, leaving Netanyahu without a government.

Gabbay was subsequently ousted and replaced with Amir Peretz, who similarly vowed not to join any government with Likud ahead of the September election. But this did not stop the premier from promising the new Labor chairman that he'd get him elected president at the expiration of Reuven Rivlin's term in 2021, a party official confirmed.

In fact, many believed Amir Peretz would be persuaded into joining a Netanyahu government during the campaign, leading him to shave his trademark moustache on TV last August "so the public can read my lips when I say: I will not sit with Netanyahu." He stood by the dramatic declaration after the September vote and Netanyahu was denied another chance at forming a government.

Gantz too has kept his word through two elections, vowing not to serve under the Likud leader while he faces criminal indictment. While he held negotiations with Netanyahu after the April and September votes, Gantz ultimately decided against walking back the promise.

Instead, the Blue and White chairman sought to break up the bloc of religious, right-wing parties formed by Netanyahu in September. But the 55-member alliance stuck together as agreed upon, with each faction swatting away tempting offers from Gantz's party.

But as the third election nears, the purist approach appears to have lost its shine.

On the left, Amir Peretz and his partner Gesher Chairwoman Orly Levy-Abekasis asserted before and after the September election that their socioeconomic-minded party was designed to cater to both flanks and that merging with the more left-wing Meretz would risk alienating those from the opposite political camp.

But with the lackluster results from the September race (six seats for Labor and five for the Meretz-led Democratic Camp) on his mind as the party-filing deadline approached this week, the still moustache-less Peretz ate his words about the importance of running a more centrist slate and agreed to merge with Nitzan Horowitz's Meretz party.

On the other side of the spectrum, New Right Chairman Naftali Bennett had been convinced over the past month that the best course for his party and for the broader right-wing was for New Right to run independently in the March race. He announced the decision a month ago and stood by it in the weeks that followed.

But just a day after re-asserting his position, Bennett on Jan.14 decided to bring Bezalel Smotrich's National Union faction into the New Right fold, laying the groundwork for Jewish Home to join a day later.

And despite assuring Otzma Yehudit's Itamar Ben Gvir he would not renege on their agreement, Rafi Peretz deserted him after pressure from Netanyahu who was convinced that the joint Jewish Home-Otzma Yehudit slate would not cross the electoral threshold.

While each of these political decisions have the power to cause significant damage to the images of the lawmakers who made them, they were also made based on a recognition that at the end of the day, sometimes there are things more important than one's word.

Because if there is any hope of breaking Israel's enduring political deadlock, it will almost certainly require lawmakers to break a promise first. ■

Times of Israel / Timesofisrael.com

Analysis

Right-wing merger leaves it playing catch-up to united left

Raoul Wootliff
JERUSALEM

The final hours and minutes before the Central Elections Committee closed its doors for parties to register their slates ahead of March's national vote on Jan 15 followed a similar pattern to the final flurries in the lead-ups to the same mid night deadlines for the last two elections

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, again, engaged in frantic efforts to pre vent right-wing votes being "wasted" on smaller parties that fail to cross the elec toral threshold, which would reduce his chances of gaining the support of at least 61 of the 120 eventual Knesset members.

Before last April's election, after the Jewish Home and National Union parties had already agreed to merge with the Kahanist extremists of Otzma Yehudit at Netanyahu's urging, representatives of the new religious-Zionist joint slate spent the final hours before the filing deadline in futile talks to try to also bring aboard former Shas Leader Eli Yishai's far-right Yachad party.

Ahead of September's vote, the smaller right-wing parties were pressured by Netanyahu to unite into a union that includ ed Jewish Home, National Union, New Right and Otzma Yehudit, along with a number of other satellites on the right. In the end, however, those efforts failed and United Right, led at the time by former justice minister Ayelet Shaked, filed its own party list without Otzma Yehudit or Moshe Feiglin's quasi-libertarian hard-right Zehut (or, indeed, the tiny anti-LGBTQ Noam party, which had temporarily agreed to run with Otzma Yehudit).

Last Wednesday, Netanyahu's repeated efforts to bring Otzma Yehudit back into the fold were again the most exciting drama leading up to the closing of registration. This time, however, it was more frantic, more messy and – with a centre-left grand union filing their own slate sans the drama – its failure potentially more damaging to the entire right-wing bloc.

The last-minute, messy agreement for Naftali Bennett and Shaked's New Right to run with both the Jewish Home and National Union capped a hectic week of political wrangling that began with Bennett's vow that his faction would run alone in the elections.

Jewish Home Chair Rafi Peretz had for days been vowing not to break the agreement he reached last month with Otzma Yehudit, but he came under immense pressure from Netanyahu's Likud party as well as other right-wing officials who were worried the Jewish Home-Otzma slate would not cross the electoral threshold.

Bennett had similar misgivings regarding the New Right's chances, which ultimately led him to break his vow to run independently in March. The defence minister had expressed hope that the national religious camp was large enough to support two parties – one being his slightly more liberal New Right and the other a conglomerate of the far-right Jewish Home, National Union and Otzma Yehudit parties. But on Jan. 14 he caved to concerns regarding the electoral threshold and inked a deal with National Union.

Naftali Bennett, head of the New Right party, presents his party list at the Knesset on Jan. 15.
OLIVIER FITOUSSI/FLASH90 PHOTO

In the end, in a bustle of disappointment and other emotions, Otzma Yehudit filed on its own with around 15 minutes remaining until the deadline, while the new alliance, to be named Yamina like it was in the last election, filed with just six minutes to go.

Although it was not his original plan, the move is somewhat of a victory for Bennett, who had conditioned Peretz's inclusion in the alliance on him breaking with Otzma Yehudit Leader Itamar Ben Gvir, and succeeded despite immense pressure from Netanyahu. Yet, it is likely an overall loss for his party and the right as a whole. Instead of gathering the fringes of Israel's right, the new union has brought together only its mainstream factions, all but guaranteeing their own political survival, but not Netanyahu's.

Bennett is indeed almost certainly safe from a repeat of the embarrassment he suffered in the 2019 April election when the then newly formed New Right failed to cross the threshold. The merger has likely ensured that the party will enter the Knesset. And he is now likely set to be the head of a bolstered (and larger) Knesset faction.

But the new party is more likely to push away voters than entice them. And the right, as Netanyahu had warned, is now almost certain to lose at least some, if not all, of the 84,000 votes that went to Otzma Yehudit last time around.

Even without Ben Gvir and Otzma Yehudit, the merger with National Union's Bezalel Smotrich, known for his anti-Arab and anti-LGBTQ statements, makes it unlikely that Bennett will succeed in wooing the "liberal" right-wing voters he had hoped to siphon away from Blue and White and Yisrael Beytenu.

At the same time, the move may have also pushed away a big chunk of the party's potential base. Peretz took heat from erstwhile allies after the 11th-hour decision to drop his alliance with Otzma Yehudit, and his Jewish Home deputy quit after he was shunted to the 11th spot on the unified list: MK Moti Yogev, who had been the No. 2 figure on the Jewish Home slate, angrily announced that he was quitting the party and delivered a biting criticism of Peretz.

"Peretz's word is worthless," he said in a hastily arranged Knesset press conference as final party slates were registered. "Peretz is not up to being a public representative… Jewish Home under Rafi Peretz has lost his way."

At the other end of the political spectrum, Jan. 15 saw a grand left-wing union made up of the Democratic Camp – itself a merger between Meretz and the Israel Democratic Party – and the Labor-Gesher partnership formed before the last election.

And while the left-wing union, to be uncreatively named Labor-Gesher-Meretz, also saw at least one prominent lawmaker left out and a number of others unhappy, for the left, the final day to file final party slates was not the same frantic mess seen on the right of the political spectrum.

Labor, the once venerable party of Israeli politics, has seen its fortunes tumble in recent years, hit by a rightward shift among Israeli voters, turmoil within the party, and the emergence of various new political players that have eroded its base.

Like the merger on the right, the centre-left union is seen as a marriage of convenience between parties that differ on ideology, but which polls have shown hovering at between four and six Knesset seats each, in danger of falling below the threshold and endangering the entire left wing bloc. And, also like the merger on the right, while likely saving either Labor and Meretz from political oblivion, the union may well end up with fewer seats than the 11 the parties currently hold combined

Gesher Head Orly Levy-Abekasis, placed second on the slate, said on Jan. 15, "We are joining hands for the children, for the elderly, for all of Israeli society. We will do everything we can to promote the really important things. Together we will bring these issues to the forefront."

Of the union, Levy-Akekasis said, "We did what was needed and now we are looking forward."

But while the union has received some internal criticism, the two parties succeeded in keeping their dirty laundry hidden, unlike the Yamina faction. And they also succeeded in preventing so-called "wasted votes."

Left out of the union was veteran MK Stav Shaffir, the Green party chairwoman, who announced she would not be running in the March election.

Unlike Ben Gvir, who is running on his own, or Yogev, who trashed his political home, Shaffir, who had weighed the possibility of an independent run with her Green party, ultimately reached the conclusion that it would not cross the electoral threshold and refused to risk wasting thousands of left-wing votes. Instead, she threw her support behind the new union.

"I won't run in this election, but I will stay in the race for our country… this union is more important than me," she said at a press conference announcing a break from politics.

A TV survey released on Jan. 13, hours after Labor and Meretz agreed on the merger, indicated that the alliance would not pay dividends at the polls, predicting that they would receive nine seats as a joint list come March 2, less than their combined force today.

However, according to the Channel 12 poll, Blue and White did manage to widen its lead over Netanyahu's Likud, with the survey predicting that Benny Gantz's party would receive 34 seats compared to 31 for the premier's faction.

With both Likud and Blue and White seeking to edge out the other after two indecisive elections, and with just 46 days now remaining until Israelis cast their ballots again, the two unions, and the manner in which they were formed and filed, may leave a divided right playing catch-up with a united left. ■

Times of Israel / Timesofisrael.com

Jailed backpacker's mother is hoping for a pardon

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF
TEL AVIV

The mother of Naama Issachar, an Israeli-American woman jailed in Russia on drug charges, touched down in Israel amid growing optimism that Russian President Vladimir Putin could pardon her daughter when he visits Jerusalem later this week.

"I believe [Putin] will pardon her and that he'll send her home as soon as possible," Yaffa Issachar told reporters at Ben Gurion Airport. "That is the hope and belief."

Issachar has been in Russia to be near Naama Issachar, 27, who in October was sentenced to over seven years in prison after some 10 grams of cannabis were found in her luggage during a stopover in Moscow, en route to Israel from India.

"This is the moment of truth," Yaffa Issachar said. "This week we'll know when she is being released."

Issachar said she hopes that when she returns to Russia it will be to bring her daughter home.

"I left [Russia] in tears because I left her there, and if there are no surprises I'll go bring her [back]," she said.

Putin is set to arrive in Israel on Thursday for a one-day visit, during which he will hold private meetings with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Reuven Rivlin. The Russian president is coming to participate in an international forum on the Holocaust hosted by Rivlin.

Netanyahu has several times over the past week spoken of his optimism that Putin's visit would mark a change for the better regarding Issachar. He repeated those hopes in remarks he made Sunday at the start of the weekly cabinet meeting at the Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem.

"I also spoke with President Putin regarding Naama Issachar and I hope that on the occasion of the visit, we will also hear good news soon," Netanyahu said.

Putin is not expected to bring Issachar with him, as some had hoped, but rather to announce a pardon and a release date.

Issachar's release is likely to come at a price, Channel 12 TV news reported, citing a senior Israeli official who said Saturday that "what Israel is giving doesn't harm it – but is important to Putin."

Yaffa Issachar, right, arrives at Ben Gurion international airport from Moscow on Jan. 19.
FLASH90 PHOTO

One possibility could be a statement supporting Moscow's narrative in an ongoing spat between Russia and Poland on the two countries' Second World War history, the report said.

Netanyahu could make a statement backing Russia's stance during the Holocaust forum on Thursday, the report said.

Russian media over the past week indicated that progress was being made, with Russian government sources telling the *Kommersant* newspaper that Putin was mulling releasing Issachar as a humanitarian gesture.

The sources expressed regret that Israel had extradited a Russian hacker to the United States, rather than trading him for Issachar.

Moscow had sought Aleksey Burkov in exchange for Issachar, according to Israeli officials, but Jerusalem in November rejected the demand and sent the hacker to the United States as agreed to face trial on embezzlement charges. Reports in Hebrew-language media have said Israeli officials believe Burkov may be connected to Russian intelligence. Burkov, in an interview with Channel 13, denied any such involvement.

A Russian court last month rejected an appeal against Issachar's conviction. Her mother said she would file another appeal with a higher-level court and also turn to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. ■

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Opinion

The dark side of remembrance

Gerald Steinberg

For many countries around the world including Canada – Jan. 27 is marked as International Holocaust Remembrance Day. It was on this date in 1945 that the Red Army reached and "liberated" whoever was still alive in Auschwitz.

Initially, Jan. 27 focused more on praising the Soviet Union for helping to defeat Nazi Germany than commemorating the victims. After the demise of the U.S.S.R. (which had become a prime mover behind anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism), the day came to focus on actual Holocaust remembrance.

This year, which comes 75 years after the events, the ceremonies and pronouncements will be particularly significant, including a conference with world leaders hosted by Israel's president in Jerusalem.

A memorial day for the victims of the unimaginable inhumanity of the Nazis and their allies is important, and its recognition by the United Nations in 2005 was a significant achievement, particularly during an era of renewed anti-Semitic attacks, Holocaust denial, revisionism and ignorance.

A day during which much of the world is focused on remembering and reflecting on those horrors certainly makes a difference. But there is also a less noble aspect to the day: for some, active involvement in Holocaust remembrance is used as a shield to protect themselves from criticism for demonizing Israel and promoting new anti-Semitism.

For this group, powerless Jewish victims are easily embraced, while Jews living in a sovereign state and defending themselves against terror are the targets of vilification, boycotts and other forms of demonization.

In describing this hypocrisy, Yehuda Bauer, a professor of Holocaust studies at Hebrew University and one of the world's most respected Shoah scholars, declared: "Now, of course, they love Jews. Especially dead Jews. The ones who died in the Holocaust, they're marvellous, they were terrific. Live Jews is something else."

His observations were specifically directed at BDS activists and self-declared anti-Zionists on university campuses, at the United Nations and in European governments, where the contrast between embracing "dead Jews" while demonizing "live Jews" in Israel is most pronounced.

On the one hand, these officials are very visible on International Holocaust Remembrance Day, while, on the other, they churn out a constant stream of anti-Israel propaganda. Their goal is to isolate and delegitimize the Jewish state, turning it into an international pariah.

For example, this year, UN officials, probably including Secretary General António Guterres (who is not an anti-Semite), will again participate in very moving events for Holocaust Remembrance Day. But inside the UN buildings in New York and Geneva, other officials are preparing their next actions in support of BDS and false accusations of Israeli war crimes at the UN Human Rights Council and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Guterres and others would accomplish much more in the battle against anti-Semitism by taking action against these purveyors of 21st-century Jew-hatred.

This hypocrisy is also very visible among politicians, diplomats and church officials, including many Germans. The same leaders and ambassadors who speak passionately at Holocaust memorials also give groups claiming to promote human rights and humanitarian aid millions of euros to attack the Jewish state.

And their diplomats repeatedly cast their votes in the UN for the Arab-led resolutions that whitewash terror and absurdly target Israel as the world's worst violator of human rights. (Recently, Canada joined the hypocritical Europeans in voting for a resolution ostensibly promoting Palestinian rights that was co-sponsored by North Korea.)

The practice of embracing dead Jews – the six million Holocaust victims – while demonizing live ones should not be allowed to continue. Attacks on Zionism and Israel must not become a means of balancing statements of sympathy and Holocaust guilt. ■

Jewish Life

MELODY WREN PHOTO

The Florida Keys – it doesn't get much better

MELODY WREN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

The Florida Keys are a 200-kilometre long chain of islands. A recently rebuilt 11-kilometre long bridge connects the mainland to a unique destination that is distinct from the rest of the United States – and that is how the local "conchs" want it.

The Keys have a much different feel than the hustle and bustle of Florida's mainland cities. A soft breeze, the gentle murmur of voices and an island vibe is felt throughout.

At the tip of the island chain is Key West. Its colourful history has turned the southernmost American city into a diverse assortment of attractions. There are many water activities to choose from - including snorkeling, parasailing, sunset cruises, kayaking, paddleboarding and deep-sea fishing – while the city's main artery, Duval Street, beats with a variety of street cafes, art galleries, world-class restaurants and a vibrant nightlife. But one thing is constant: at the end of the day, locals and tourists gather for the famous spectacle of the Key West sunset celebration.

The conchs (descendants of Bahamian immigrants) are proud that Key West is closer to Cuba than to a Walmart. In the 1800s, the Cuba connection made the island the cigar-making capital of the world, producing a million hand-rolled cigars a year. Cigar makers are still prevalent, but the numbers have dwindled.

On the way to Key West, it's natural to explore the nearby city of Marathon, which is spread across 13 islands, the village of Islamorada, which is located on five islands, and the island known as Big Pine Key.

The Turtle Hospital in Marathon became popular with the rise of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles in the 1980s and hasn't stopped, receiving approximately 320 visitors every day.

Leading our tour of the facility was its manager, Bette Zirkelbach. The hospital's main focus is the rescue and rehabilitation of sea turtles, a large part of which is educating the general public so they know how to spot an injured or sick turtle. Virtual field trips conducted over the Internet helps the hospital spread its message the world over.

The day we visited, there were over 60 turtles, with six out of 10 of them having been rescued as a direct result of people who had visited the hospital. With three ambulances on hand, its staff can respond to calls immediately. Most of the turtles are juvenile greens or huge loggerheads, with the largest weighing in at 144 kilograms. The turtles live to be 75 to 100 years old, so if a juvenile comes in and is rehabilitated and then released, it can go on to have a long life. The hospital holds a turtle release every six months, which is open to the public. Some of the turtles released are given satellite tags, so they can be tracked.

Located in Morada Way's Arts and Cultural District, the Florida Keys Brewing Company, which opened four years ago, is owned and run by Craig McBay, a fellow Canadian from Burlington, Ont. It has 20 beers on tap and three core beers,which it distributes to over 200 bars, as well as a tasting room where one can order a flight of 10 beers to sample. The brews are infused with local flavours, such as Key limes, citrus and honey.

Our half day of kayaking offered a great perspective of the marshy mangroves in the area. Bill Keogh guides kayak groups across the channel into the backcountry, weaving through mangroves and touching on the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico.

Keogh is a natural instructor who gently guides amateurs through the best kayaking techniques for getting through the challenging mangrove roots. Taking paddles apart and paddling canoe-style made it easier, though it was still an obstacle course. Upside-down jellyfish, cormorants, black crabs, a cave of luma worms and a school of mullet were among the fascinating things we saw on the trip.

As another way to get time on the water, a morning dolphin watching outing and snorkeling through the clear, calm turquoise waters is hard to beat. A perfect ending to a day is relaxing on a fast 69' sailing catamaran to watch the sunset. We enjoyed drinks served by several bartenders and delicious canapés as the sun sank behind the clouds. It truly doesn't get much better than that.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

A local program, called Connect & Protect, aims to protect the area's natural environment, so future generations can enjoy it, as well. As Carol Shaunessy of Florida Keys & Key West Tourism explains, "It's about reef preservation, and taking care of our creatures in a natural world. Our focus is to encourage visitors to make their own connection by doing volun-tourism, wearing reef-safe sun screen, visiting the Turtle Hospital to see the work being done and being a part of it."

Some of the work involves restoring coral reefs with the help of volunteers, who transplant coral from a nursery into the reefs. There is also a bird sanctuary and local fishing captains pioneered a catch-and-release program to help maintain the fish stock.

After staying on Duck Key for two nights, exploring Marathon and Islamorada, and kayaking at Big Pine Key, we made our way to Key West.

Shaunessy summed up the energy in Key West beautifully: "Key West is not about what you own, but who you are. It's not about what's in your bank account, but what's in your heart." ■

The Marathon Turtle Hospital.

An artist at the Hungry Tarpon Restaurant. MELODY WREN PHOTOS

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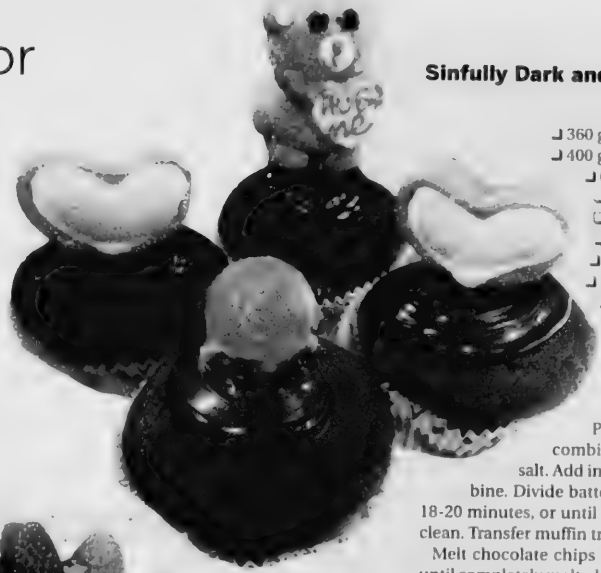
THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
JANUARY 23, 2020

February is for food lovers

RANDY FINGRUT
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

February,the month of love and romance, is almost here. During this month, some couples book romantic getaways, or extravagant dinners. Some give rose bouquets, or one perfect single rose, while others gift sparkling jewelry or beautiful heart-shaped boxes filled with chocolates. Whatever romantic path you choose this February, curl up in front of a roaring fire, or watch a romantic movie and indulge in an amazingly decadent dessert. ■



Sinfully Dark and Delicious Chocolate Cupcakes

- 360 g (3 cups) flour
- 400 g (2 cups) sugar
- 65 g (2/3 cups) cocoa powder, sifted
- 8 g (2 tsp) baking soda
- 1.2 g (1/4 tsp) salt
- 500 ml (2 cups) water
- 2 eggs
- 250 ml (1 cup) Canola oil
- 10 ml (2 tsp) pure vanilla extract
- 45 ml (3 tbsp) cider vinegar
- 220 g (1¼ cups) semi-sweet or dark chocolate chips

Preheat over to 180 C (350 F). In food processor, combine flour, sugar, cocoa powder, baking soda and salt. Add in water, Canola oil, vanilla and vinegar and combine. Divide batter among 30 paper-lined muffin cups. Bake for 18-20 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the centre comes out clean. Transfer muffin tray to a rack and let cool completely.

Melt chocolate chips in microwave for 1½ minutes. Stir with a fork until completely melted. Spoon a heaping teaspoon of melted chocolate over cupcakes and decorate with pink and/or red candies.

Scrumptious Strawberry Layer Cake

White cake

- 300 g (2¼ cups) flour, plus more for dusting the pans
- 240 ml (1 cup) 1% milk, or unsweetened almond beverage
- 6 large egg whites, at room temperature
- 10 ml (2 tsp) pure vanilla extract
- 350 g (1¾ cups) granulated sugar
- 16 g (4 tsp) baking powder
- 1 g (1/8 tsp) salt
- 170 g (3/4 cup) unsalted butter or vegan margarine, softened but still cool

Strawberry sauce

- 600 g (3 cups) strawberries, sliced
- 100 g (1/2 cup) sugar
- 15 ml (1 tbsp) lemon juice
- 1.25 ml (1/4 tsp) pure vanilla extract

Whipped cream (can be replaced with 500 ml non-dairy whipped topping)

- 500 ml (2 cups) whipping cream
- 20 ml (4 tsp) pure vanilla extract
- 10.5 g (4 tsp) icing sugar
- 2 (454 g) boxes fresh strawberries, washed, dried and hulled

To make the cake, preheat oven to 180 C (350 F). Spray 3 23-cm (9-inch) round spring form pans with Canola oil spray and line the bottoms with parchment paper rounds.

In a food processor, add flour, sugar, baking powder and salt and combine. Add butter or margarine, pulsing until mixture resembles moist crumbs, with no flour remaining. Add the milk, egg whites and vanilla into the mixture and pulse until combined. Stop and scrape the sides of the bowl. Pulse again.

Divide batter evenly between the three prepared cake pans. Spread batter to edges and smooth tops. Tap to remove bubbles.

Arrange pans at least 7 cm (3 inches) from the oven walls and 7 cm apart. (If oven is small, place pans on separate racks in staggered fashion, to allow for air circulation.) Bake until a toothpick inserted in the centre comes out clean, 35-45 minutes. Let cakes rest in pans for 3 minutes. Loosen cake from sides of pan with an offset spatula or knife. Let cool completely before removing from pans.

To make the strawberry sauce, combine strawberries, sugar, lemon juice and vanilla in a medium saucepan and bring to a boil. Lower heat to a gentle simmer until the strawberries are soft and the syrup is thickened and reduced by 1/3 to 1/2 of its original volume, approximately 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Chill before using.

To make the whipped cream, beat cream and vanilla until soft peaks form. Sprinkle in sugar and continue beating until peaks stand on their own.

To assemble, cut 3 7-cm (3 inch) strips of parchment paper. Lay them in a triangle pattern on the outside edge of a platter to protect the platter from drips. Place first layer of cake over parchment paper. Cover cake with 1/3 of the whipped cream or non-dairy whipped topping and place 1/3 of the fresh strawberries on top. Spoon strawberry sauce over the fresh berries. Repeat the same steps with the other two layers. Carefully remove the parchment paper strips.

Keep refrigerated until serving.

Spiked Cranberry and Pineapple Loaf

- 150 g (3/4 cup) sugar
- 60 g (1/4 cup) margarine or butter
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 240 g (2 cups) flour
- 4 g (1 tsp) baking powder
- 3 g (1/2 tsp) baking soda
- 2.5 g (1/2 tsp) salt
- 170 g (3/4 cup) undrained crushed pineapples
- 120 g (1 cup) dried cranberries
- 60 ml (1/4 cup) dry sherry
- 35 g (1/2 cup) almonds

Preheat oven to 180 C (350 F). Prepare a loaf pan with Canola oil spray.

Heat sherry in microwave for 1 minute. Add in cranberries and soak for 5 minutes, then drain.

In a food processor, cream sugar and margarine. Add egg and combine. Alternately mix in flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt and crushed pineapple. Stir in cranberries and almonds. Pour into a loaf pan and bake for 50-60 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the centre comes out clean.

Let cool in pan on a cooling rack. Run an offset spatula around the outside of the cake. Turn out on rack.

This dessert is extra delicious when served with whole cranberry sauce spiked with extra dry sherry.

Yiddish Corner

פֿאַרוואָס טאָקע יִידיש?

GERRY KANE
yankele635@gmail.com

איך שטעל דאָ פֿאָר יִידישער און נעוּאַנקער יאָס ייִנ באריסטער ש־אַליזעבעט שי־נאָליסט ייִנ־ר
לויטן האָט נעשרבן צו דעם המשך־דיה. ער־ר האָט נעפֿרעגט א פֿראָגע ייִנגן ייִנדיגונג אי־ר האָט נעשט־
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"־ייִ עמע פֿראַגע בלייַבט צוויפֿאל באַאל. מיר ייִנדיגע ־ אי־ז מיט אן שי־ט, אַבער אי־ז אינדיקע
אייִנדיגע בלייַבט ד־ ־ייִ אן אַבער־יקער אי־מי־ ־אי־ ־ייִ מען ־אַלע אי־ר נעפֿרעגט: צילם ־אַס לעבן מיר.
פֿאר־יאָס עס מיר?...

אי־ז האָ־ר די שפֿראַ־ר נאשיר־לעבסטע פֿיקצע פֿיעמע לעבן. האָ־ר פֿרעגט מיר: האָס אי־ר? אי־ מיר
־האָפֿן אי־ר דעם ענבן א קלאַס אין טרעפֿלעבן עטפֿער.

מיר אַלע, די באוווסטזינקע לובהאַבער פֿון יידיש, ייִסי פֿאר־יאָס מיר האָפֿן לויבטן אין דעטן יידיש,
אין פֿאר־יאָס מיר נעפֿינן פֿאר נישט אין ־ייִבסיק ־ייִ א־סצילבן אי־ ־ער יידישער קילטור. מיר
־האָפֿן אַבער קלאָר מאכן, פֿאר אַלע אינדיערע פֿייַנד פֿאר אונדזער נעמילשאפֿטלעבער סבובר אין
פֿאר כלל ישׂראל ־אי־ נאר באונדזערס פֿאר־ ־ער יונגן ־ייִ - פֿאר־יאָס יידיש אי־ פֿאר ־ייִ אוי ־ייִבסיק.
פֿאר אונדז אי־ יאָס פּוילשסטעניק קלאָר אי־ אין יידיש לשון שטענדיק ־ייִ נאציאנאלע יאָ־רצלע־ פֿון
אינדיער פֿאלק, ־ייִ יאַרצלי־ פֿון אונדזער נאציע אויך אבייַיִטיק פֿארשטענער פֿארנאנדיס;
אי־ מיר האָפֿן ־ייִ פֿארנאנדיס נוס באקענע - אין מיר הענען יאָ ־ייִ אוי שטאָרק אפֿענדיטע
(אבער אויך ייִסיק אויסנוצונטע) פּראָיעקט, א פֿאלק אין א פֿארנאנדיס יאָס נוס ־ייִ ענקפֿטס; פֿאר
אונדז אי־ יאָ קלאָר אי־ ־ייִ בעדיס פֿי־ יידיש - באיינדיס ־ייִ אשכוישע עדי־ יאָס אבער
800 יאָר נעהערט יידיש, אי־ זיי־ א ייִבער לשון־אמיי־ אי־ נעשאפֿן נעי־אי־ אי־ יידיש, אי־ א יאָפֿטיק
יידישע קולטור יאָס נעבליט אין אט יענע לשי־ אין ־ייִ לעצטע עי־ייִ־ערט יאָ־ - אין אי־ נעי־אי־
פֿארשלונק ענייאבן; מיט דער פֿילפֿלאַנדיקער יידיש־קייט באַשע זיי־ ־ייִ ענפֿטע שוואַס פֿי־
אונדזער פֿאלק; אי־ ־ייִ יאָס ענע פֿארשלונק נעי־אי־ זיי־ אט ־ייִ ־ייִלאוסטע נאַבּ־ענדיס פֿאר־ענדיס ענע
־ער ענטשי־־ן, ונעי־ - פֿאר־ ־ייִ מיר־סטע פֿון אינדי־ ־ נעי־ן אינדיערע עלטערי, אדער אינדיער
באַבייַיִטעס, אי־ ־ייִ אונדער לובהאבער נלייַבט פֿי־ אונדיערע מיטפֿרי־ אי־ פֿי־ אונדיער פֿאלק. אי־
־ייִ דאָ יידיש רעדט!

[נו פֿאר־יאָס מאַכט אי־ער ־ער רעדט דאָס יידיש?]

"ענטפֿער מיר ערטיק, אי־ ־ייִ יאַרצלי, פֿון ער ־ייִ־ערט־קלוסיי־ האבי מיט נעשטעלט אין דעם מיטער
אי־־אפֿעשן באָ־, ער פֿעסטער שטאַם פֿי־ יידיש אי־ יאָס נעי־ן מיט פֿאר־יאָרצלי. ־ייִ ענ־ייִן
־האָבן יאָפֿטיר נעהערט אין ־ייִ ניט ־ייִבעס פֿי־ ער יידישער עמיגראַנט - אבער ־ייִ־ יאָרצלי ־ייִ־ען
נעי־אָן פֿארשטיין, האָבן די צוויי־ נישט אי־מענ־אלען, ־ייִ יאָ־ אונדזערי־ מיר־ענער. ־אר יאָלי־
אין אין אי־רשטפֿאָן פֿון ־ייִ אלץ ניי־ אין ניט שפֿראַנען, באַש ־ער־יי־ל יאָ־ בלייַבן אין ש־יאַבּ,
אבער זי אוטוויקלען ־ך אי־ יבוק פֿי־ ער אימיגי־נטלעבער ־ייִעלטבער אין אינטשט בלעבדיס
פֿון יידיש. די ינגע שפֿראַנען ענען אבער שטאַרק באַדראָפֿן פֿון ער אינוילאַי־ער
העלבסטפֿארלוסטיקע, פֿון יולבער יאָס ־ייִדיש פֿאלק אי־ נעי־אָן אנעשטעהט."

[...דאָס אינערצוקומען, האלט לוריין לינס אין די רענט פֿון אינדיע ציטיער] "־ יעמען בכלל נישט
אין חשבון, יאָס קען נעסאָן ווערן אין ערשטער רי־ - דיר־ שטארקן די יידישיזירונג. ־ייִ ־אבן יאָס
יידיש לשון פֿשוט אינסגעשלאָסן פון דער יידישער דערציי־.

אין דאָס דארפן מיר אריפֿקלערן פֿאר די אלע, יאָס זאָגן, אי־ 'יידיש דארף מען נישט האבן'. אונדזער
ענטפֿאר צו די אלע פֿארלוסטיקע־נערס דארף זיין, אז אָן יידיש אין קיין אמתדיקע יידישקייט נישטאָ!
יידישקייט מיינט נישט דווקא פֿרומקייט, ווי מאנכע טייטשן דאָס אויס. דאָס עצם וואָרט יידישקייט נעמט
זיך פֿון די סאמע קערנדיקסטע ווערטער אין באגריפן פֿון יידיש לשון: יידישקייט מיינט אז

דאָס מיינט אי ווילטלעכע (סעקולערע) אי־ דעלינעדע יידישקייט אין אלע אירע פֿארמען, אבער דער
עיקר – אין יידישן לשון.

יידישקייט מיינט: פלעכטן די קיים פון יידישן לשון, פון יידישער קולטור, פון יידישן נאציאנאלן
באווווסטזין.

דערפֿאר איז יידיש די נאציאנאלע אידענטיטעט־קארטע פון יידישן פאלק, פון יידישן מענטש. דערפֿאר
איז יידיש דער אויסנטישער אדרעס פון יידישקייט און פון יידישער נאציאנאלער אנגעהעריקייט."

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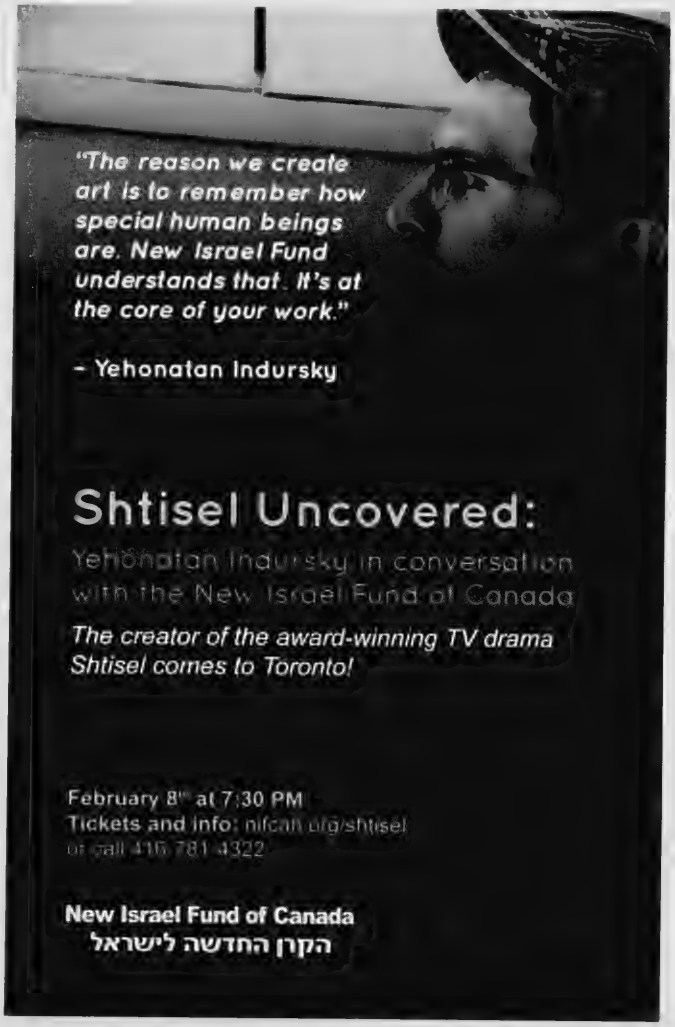

THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
JANUARY 23, 2020

Hip-hop artist shoots for the stars with new album

DAVID SILVERBERG
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Before the studios, tattoos, sound-mixing and dropping singles on Spotify, then-14-year-old Myer Clarity took the stage at Concordia University's music hall, to perform a song he wrote about his music instructor who had recently died – jazz great Ernie Nelson.

Clarity, who grew up in Montreal, felt he had to memorialize his mentor, whose lessons guide him to this day.

"Ernie taught me to keep my lyrics simple, not be too clever or wordy," says Clarity, 27, from his downtown Toronto home. "And he told me not to cram too many words into one sentence."

That advice has proved timeless, thanks to Clarity's passion as a rapper, singer and producer. His most recent album, *Not All Heroes Wear Capes Pt. 2* came out in 2019. It was a follow-up to 2018's *Not All Heroes Wear Capes Pt. 1*. Late last year, he released a fiery single, *Love Me When I'm High*, that's reminiscent of a heady mix of Kanye West, the Weeknd and early Drake.

What Clarity appreciates about making music is two-fold: "I love being able to tune out the outside world and hone in on something constructive and therapeutic," he says. "A lot of people agree that writing raps is cathartic for them, and you sort of introduce yourself through what you write. It's an opportunity to be fully heard, as you."

He adds that, "Creating music with others is one of the most fun things you can do in life. Even though writing is so personal and introspective, I feel like performing music is meant to be a group activity."

Clarity has collaborated on tracks with Toronto rapper iLLvibe and singers Andrew Cameron and Farog4l.

Clarity began his music career when, as a teen, he started creating beats for other rappers to use in their tracks. "Since I was buying beats for tracks, I thought I should make them myself. Necessity is the mother of invention, after all."

Clarity has lots of praise for his family, especially his mother, who he says has been very supportive of his love of music.

Myer Clarity

"I was a pretty troubled kid with a lot of emotional issues and I'm sure she was stoked to see I was getting into anything that wasn't a fight," Clarity recalls. He also remembers his parents sending him "Hanukkah raps because they wanted me to rap about the holidays," he says, laughing.

When Clarity got into rapping, his early influences were Eminem and Halifax rapper Classified, which prompted him to take music lessons with Nelson. "I then realized I could get studio time, but that cost money, so at school, I would trade my potato chips for money, anything to get into the studio," Clarity says.

Clarity has found his groove in Toronto, where he not only makes music, but also runs a studio. He has also earned extra income working as a roadie for touring shows for the likes of Beyonce, Taylor Swift and U2. "One of the guitar techs at the U2 show gave me a guitar pic after the show and I sold it online, making more money, $250, than I did for the actual gig," Clarity says.

As for what he'd like to see happen in the future, Clarity says, "I have this dream of music becoming a sustainable source of income, and in a perfect world, I'd make a fat stack from music and use it to level the playing field for the people I care about." ■

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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS CJN

A new siddur specifically for shivah houses

MARTIN LOCKSHIN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

It is a truism that people often turn to religion when they lose a loved one. Beginning with prayers at the shivah, Jews often find themselves attending services regularly, even if they never did before.

The people attending services in a shivah house, both the mourners and those who come to comfort them, may be beginners at Jewish prayer. Even people who attend services regularly may feel like beginners, due to the many differences between the prayers recited at synagogue and a shivah house (some prayers are omitted, others are added). Praying from a regular siddur (prayer book) in a shivah house can be a challenge and often requires a lot of page turning.

In 1953, American Conservative Rabbi Morris Silverman (1894-1973) published a prayer book called *Prayers and Consolations*, which included only those prayers that are recited in a shivah house. Rabbi Silverman is well known for editing prayer books: he was the editor of the Silverman machzor, a prayer book for the High Holidays, as well as one for Shabbat and holidays. Both were widely used in Conservative synagogues for decades. All three works included fine English translations of the prayers.

As a teenager in the 1960s, when I was still learning my way around the siddur, I found *Prayers and Consolations* very useful. I saw it in most shivah houses in Toronto, even those of Orthodox synagogue members. (At least in its earliest editions, the liturgy was identical to that of Orthodox Judaism. Even the prayers for the restoration of sacrifices, which Conservative Judaism removed or rewrote decades ago, were included in the 1953 edition of *Prayers and Consolations*.)

Now, Koren Publishers of Jerusalem, which specializes in carefully edited siddurim, has put out *The Koren Siddur for the House of Mourning*, which was edited by Rabbi Leonard Matanky. The prayers are translated by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, the former chief rabbi of the United Kingdom. Other admirable features of this and other Koren siddurim include clear instructions, attractive fonts and some small efforts to include women.

> “A siddur designed specifically for the house of mourning is (a) source of comfort.”
>
> **Rabbi Leonard Matanky**

The Koren Siddur for the House of Mourning, *with translations by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, edited by Rabbi Leonard Matanky.*

Koren Publishers Jerusalem

The volume is handsome and slim, despite its 600 pages, thanks to its use of thin paper. Its small size is important, since synagogues frequently transport multiple siddurim to shivah houses.

Yet this siddur is three times the length of *Prayers and Consolations*. *The Koren Siddur for the House of Mourning* has over 20 pages summarizing the laws of mourning, for example, while *Prayers and Consolations* has three and a half.

This book also has many sections of Mishnah, because, as the introduction explains, in Orthodox shivah houses, “It has become the custom for a comforter to study Mishnah in the shivah house between Mincha and Maariv (the late afternoon and evening services, respectively) and to apply some of the lessons of the Mishnah to the life of the departed.” The Mishnah is printed with an English commentary by Rabbi Adin Steinsalz that’s taken from a different book published by Koren.

This new siddur also includes a special version of *Grace after Meals* (*Birkat ha-Mazon*) for the shivah house, a text that includes several moving lines, such as: “May He who repairs the breaches in Israel, repair this breach in us.” When I sat shivah, I found the recitation of this prayer, one of the only prayers that refers directly to death and loss, very meaningful.

The custom of reciting this different version of grace is, however, not universally observed. In fact, while this siddur has restored it, the editor writes in a footnote that, “The predominant custom is not to use this unique formula, and instead to recite the regular *Birkat ha-Mazon*,” which is not included in the siddur.

Another significant addition is that this siddur includes the Torah service and the text of all possible Torah readings that could be read in a shivah house. *Prayers and Consolations* never mentions the possibility of reading Torah in a shivah house. In my recollection, when I first started paying shivah visits in Toronto, it was almost unheard of for the service to include reading Torah. Now it is common.

The change is probably a function of increased affluence, not increased religious devotion. Many synagogues now own a Torah scroll dedicated to shivah houses that’s sent to the home of any member who suffers a loss, along with siddurim and other shivah accoutrements.

What is omitted from *The Koren Siddur for the House of Mourning* is also telling. *Prayers and Consolations* included over 30 pages of English readings and meditations related to death and mourning. *The Koren Siddur for the House of Mourning* includes no supplementary readings.

The decision not to include texts that address death directly is surprising. But Rabbi Matanky explains in his short introduction to the siddur that, “A siddur designed specifically for the house of mourning is (a) source of comfort. Such a volume can help the mourner … to faithfully follow the halakhot of mourning….

“But more importantly, it enables the mourner to speak with God, to find inspiration and, hopefully, to find comfort and consolation. We are a most fortunate people to have our halakhah to guide us and guide our community to comfort us.”

In other words, for the editors of this siddur, comfort comes from ritual, from the prayers recited, the Mishnah studied and the laws observed, and not from meditations about death, loss or loneliness. ■

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'Filipino Schindler' story recreated in disappointing film

MICHAEL FRAIMAN
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Over a game of poker in the humid night time hours of Manila in the late 1930s, Alex Frieder proposed a radical idea that would ultimately save 1,200 Jewish lives.

Frieder, whose family moved its cigar-manufacturing business from Manhattan to the Philippines in 1918 to cut production costs, became a well-connected businessman in the southeast Asian country. His poker pals included a U.S. colonel named Dwight Eisenhower, American high commissioner to the Philippines Paul McNutt, and Manuel Quezon, president of the Philippines, which was then an American protectorate.

One night, Frieder raised the subject of Jewish refugees from Europe. The conversation marks an early scene in the new film *Quezon's Game*, which will be released in selected Canadian theatres on Jan. 31. Frieder brings a telegram from his associate in the Chinese Consulate in Austria, warning of the Nazis' sinister plans.

"They want to exterminate the Jews," Frieder's brother says.

"What Jews?" Eisenhower replies.

"All of them," Frieder says.

"All Jews? It's unthinkable!" rebuffs McNutt.

Unfortunately, the dialogue doesn't dig much deeper than this. Totally lacking in subtext and subtlety, the movie gives off the feeling that Holocaust educators with no filmmaking experience teamed up with the production crew of a Filipino soap opera. Peppered with random outbursts and dialogue so bad it's actually kind of funny, the film contains oddly small inaccuracies, too, like when Eisenhower boasts, "They don't call me the poker wizard of Manila for nothing!" (In reality, it seems nobody called him that at all; Eisenhower was known as "the bridge wizard of Manila," though he also played poker.)

It's a shame, because the story behind this mediocre melodrama is a fascinating one, perhaps better served in literature or documentary form. The few non-fiction works that do cover the subject – the memoir *Escape to Manila: From Nazi Tyranny to Japanese Terror* by Frank Ephraim, for example, or the documentary *An Open Door: Jewish Rescue in the Philippines* – tell the tale from Jewish perspectives, rather than that of President Quezon, who faced a serious dilemma in deciding whether or not to bring hundreds of Jews to his country.

Raymond Bagatsing

In *Quezon's Game*, the president is played with mostly thoughtful stoicism by Raymond Bagatsing, a well-known Filipino TV actor, who only sometimes delves into laugh-out-loud melodrama. (At one point, his character suffers a bad coughing fit from a relapse of tuberculosis, but is simultaneously furious at his American overlords' dismissal of his visa requests for refugees, so he ends up pushing everything off his desk, collapsing to the floor and standing up again to push more things off.)

Quezon faces domestic anti-Semitism from ignorant government officials more focused on re-election than saving lives. McNutt, too, struggles against systemic anti-refugee sentiment from the American government. However, the team ultimately prevails, raising the annual immigration quota, allowing them to bring in 1,200 European Jews before Japanese occupation forced Quezon into exile – a few years before his death in 1944 from tuberculosis.

No doubt Quezon deserves wider recognition and gratitude from the Jewish community. In February 2005, the Jewish community of Cincinnati, the Frieders' hometown, honoured the events by hosting a joint Jewish-Filipino public Shabbat service, with songs sung in both Tagalog and Hebrew, with numerous descendants of the original refugees and politicians invited, including Manuel L. Quezon III, the president's grandson.

"We're a very hospitable people and we had experienced exile and imprisonment during the Spanish colonization and the early American occupation, so someone of my grandfather's generation would have been conscious of the plight of refugees," he said, before succinctly summarizing the story: "We're a sucker for anyone who's suffering." ■

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CAMPS

THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
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Camp Northland-B'nai Brith: This is our camp. This is our future

Camp Northland-B'nai Brith (NBB) has a glorious past and an amazing opportunity for the future. NBB belongs to all of us. If you are reading this, you need to know that this is your camp, too. It belongs to the entire Jewish community, regardless of where you may have gone to camp or where your children may otherwise go today.

All of the thousands of Jewish kids who were fortunate enough to be touched by the magic of summer at Camp Frailoch, Mothers and Babes, B'nai Brith, Northland, YMHA, Good Fellowship Lodge, Maple Lake Resort – whatever its iteration over the past 110 years – formed the roots of our Jewish community. All of these iterations have evolved into today's Camp Northland. This is our camp. Our shared memories and history are what make this camp so central and common to all of us and keep us connected through our roots. Tragic, sad and alarming events around the world continue to remind us that our roots are needed to sustain the storm.

Camp Northland is a values-driven camp that builds mensches. The camp builds its daily programs with a view towards building valuable life skills, pluralism, Jewish identity, the role of family and community, as well as the overarching lens of safety in everything being done. More and more families are choosing Camp Northland because it is the only Jewish community camp in the Greater Toronto Area that can offer the activities and programs of a "private camp" and still offer the values and culture of an authentic Jewish camp experience.

As the Jewish community has evolved over the years, so too has Camp Northland. Always a diverse community camp, the NBB population is a reflection of the GTA's pluralistic Jewish population. The camp has Jewish learning, offers a supervised kosher kitchen, actively encourages a connection to Israel, offers creative and engaging programming while simultaneously providing almost every activity under the sun in its refreshed and revitalized facility. It is a down-to-earth camp where kids are safe to be themselves and have fun. The environment is inclusive and not materialistic. Children build confidence and learn resilience. This camp is changing our Jewish future.

To maintain this central role contributing to the sustainability of our Jewish future in the GTA, the camp also relies on direct community support, philanthropy and individual donor support to continue its mission and achieve its vision to give every child an amazing Jewish camp experience far into the future.

The question becomes: what will that future be for Camp Northland, for the Jewish community and for all of us? The Our Camp, Our Future growth initiative tackles that question head-on, renewing our collective commitment to bringing this vision to life. We hope to reinvigorate everyone, bringing excitement to the whole community about Northland's momentum and growth plans. ■

To donate to the Our Camp, Our Future campaign, go online to campnbb.com, or call 905-881-0018. Together, let's secure the next 110 years and beyond for our future generations. Onward, Northland.

Parashah

Va'era | Exodus 6:2-9:35

Rabbi Andrew Rosenblatt says a true king protects the vulnerable
Rabbi Michal Shekel chronicles Yocheved's path toward redemption
Rabbi Howard Morrison shows how Moses learned the value of gratitude

Rabbi Andrew Rosenblatt

Rabbi Michal Shekel

Rabbi Howard Morrison

We have all found ourselves in an argument with another person and, in the echo chamber of our minds, we fantasize about a total admission of guilt, which rarely materializes. In Parashat Va'era, Pharaoh makes such an admission.

Prior to the plague of hail, Pharaoh had been warned of the consequences should he fail to let the Israelites leave Egypt. Additionally, he had been specifically advised to bring livestock indoors, as any person or animal in the field would die. He ignored both warnings, and after the hail visited destruction upon the livestock, Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and says, "I have sinned this time."

The Malbim, a 19th-century commentator, points out that while Pharaoh's words might look like a complete admission, they were only a half measure, as he is only admitting that he has failed in protecting the national herds. Pharaoh is not admitting that he has been wrong in oppressing the Children of Israel or failing to let them go.

This is a pattern that we see among the kings of Egypt, Assyria and others: they seem to serve their own glory, not the protection of the people and certainly not a higher concept of justice. For further evidence of this concept, one can note the way Pharaoh administers the distribution of grain to his starving nation at the end of Genesis – he turns them into his slaves.

But God will not suffer Jewish leadership that fails to protect the people. For example, Yehoyachin, one of the last kings of Judah, administers over a reappropriation of slaves that the prophet Jeremiah will identify as the sin that caused the destruction of the Temple. Similarly, when Isaiah issues his vision of the regrowth of the Davidic dynasty and the downfall of Assyria, he will say about the new king, "Thus he shall judge the poor justly, and he shall chastise with equity the lowly of the land" (Isaiah 11:4). A true king protects the vulnerable. ■

Rabbi Andrew Rosenblatt is the spiritual leader of Congregation Schara Tzedeck in Vancouver.

It is always intriguing when the Torah mentions a woman by name, as happens this week in the introduction of Moses' lineage: "Amram took Yocheved, his aunt, as his wife, and she bore him Aaron and Moses" (Exodus 6:20).

Yocheved's name also appears in Numbers 26:59. Biblical scholar Carol Meyers points out that Yocheved is the first person in the Bible to have a divine appellation as part of her name, represented by the syllable "yo." This is a shortened version of the divine four-letter name used in the Torah.

"Yocheved" is thought to mean "God's glory." The first syllable represents God's name and "cheved" is taken to be from the Hebrew root *kaf-bet-dalet*, meaning glory.

This three-letter root keeps popping up in the story of the Exodus. In last week's parashah, it appears when Moses protested that he was not the man to represent God before Pharaoh because he was slow of speech and tongue (Exodus 4:10). The Hebrew word translated as "slow" is *kaved*, meaning "heavy."

Kaved is also used five times in reference to the plagues. In Exodus 14:25, when the Egyptians give chase to the newly freed slaves, God causes the chariots to move forward with difficulty. The Hebrew word translated as "difficulty" is *bi-chvedut*. Once again, it is formed from the same root.

Also of significance are the five times we are told that Pharaoh's heart was heavy (*kaved*). How interesting that the same root is shared by the Hebrew words for "heavy" and "glory" and applies so differently to Pharaoh and to Yocheved. The Egyptian monarch is weighed down, while the lowly Hebrew slave is not.

The difference is the first syllable in Yocheved's name, representing God. While Pharaoh's burden increases because of his stubborn denial of God – a weighty mistake that immobilizes him – God's presence in Yocheved's name alleviates her burden and will lead to redemption. ■

Rabbi Michal Shekel is the executive director of the Toronto Board of Rabbis and spiritual leader of Har Tikvah Congregation in Brampton, Ont.

The first seven of the Ten Plagues are recounted in Parashat Va'era. Interestingly, it is Aaron, not Moses, who brings on the first three plagues of blood, frogs and lice.

Why not Moses? An ancient midrash explains as follows: Moses had been saved from Pharaoh's fatal decree on newborn male Israelites by being hidden among the reeds of the Nile River. Even his name is derived from the phrase "for I drew him from the water." Since Moses was under a debt of obligation to the waters of Egypt, God would not allow him to repay kindness with injury. The Talmud echoes this teaching with the statement, "Cast no mud into the well from which you have drunk." Similarly, a midrash focused on the plague of lice states, "God told Moses, 'the dust of the earth which protected you when you had earlier killed an Egyptian – it is not right that the dust for bringing forth lice shall be hit by you.'"

The lesson for us is clear: if one must show gratitude to an inanimate object, which feels no pain, all the more so, we must be mindful to express gratitude to the living, who do feel pain.

The siddur (prayer book) attunes us to the centrality of offering gratitude on a regular basis. Upon arising in the morning, we recite *Modeh Ani*, which begins with "I give thanks before you." In *Pesukei de-Zimra*, the introductory service on weekday mornings, we rise for a psalm of thanksgiving. In the daily *Amidah*, we recite, "we give thanks to you." In the blessings after meals, we give thanks for a number of different themes, which include the gifts of sustenance, land, spirituality and God's beneficence.

As Moses learns the value of gratitude through the experience of the Ten Plagues, may we express sincere gratitude every day of our lives. ■

Rabbi Howard Morrison is senior rabbi – mara d'atra at Beth EmethBais Yehuda Synagogue in Toronto.

Social Scene

Itai Orion, David Meyerowitz, Consul General Galit Baram, Elana Abrams and deputy Consul General Nissim Amdur

Raphael Herbst, international relations department and Sidney Benizri, CMDA national executive director

Honouring our Paramedics

TORONTO

Canadian Magen David Adom 'Honouring our Paramedics' evening set two records: First, it had the most participants who ever attended an event, and also in terms of the donations and sponsorships received. Special guest Michael Aloni from the hit series *Shtisel* amused the crowd with fun highlights of his upbringing that led him into his memorable Hasidic role. Guests were also treated to an exciting and dynamic performance from Israel's own Mayumana dance troupe. Consul General Galit Baram spoke of the ever-present challenges facing the State of Israel and the vital role Magen David Adom plays in guaranteeing safe, speedy and reliable emergency services for the people of Israel at all times. ■

Graham Rosenberg, Michael Aloni and Audrey Rosenberg

Kathy Samuel, Michelle Samuel-English and Dr. Daniella Samuel

Tom Fairfull, Raphael Herbst, Hershel Recht

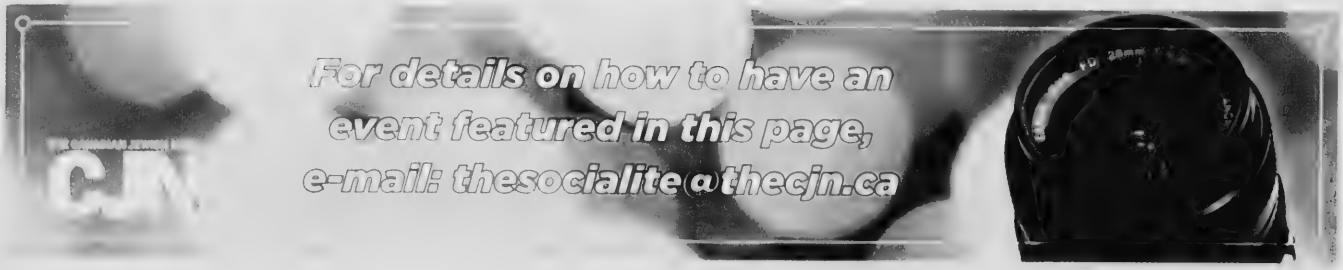
Perlan and Aaron Waxman

Serena and Shane Farberman

Saul and Toby Feldberg, Lily Elsner and Bob Ritter

Arnold and Sharon Recht, Judith Bloom

Kerry Liblong and Jeremy Bacher



What's New

JAN. 23 - 30

by Lila Sarick

Thursday, Jan. 23

ANTI-SEMITISM THEN AND NOW
Lauren Isaacs of Herut Canada and **Diane Bederman** of Hasbara discuss "Anti-Semitism Through the Ages," 7:30 p.m., Beth Emeth, $5.

THE CANTOR
Rabbi Wayne Allen discusses "The Cantor: From the Mishnah to Modernity," 7:30 p.m., Beth David.

Friday, Jan. 24

CANADA'S SOLDIERS
Author **Ellin Bessner** discusses "The Heroic Role of Canada's Jewish Soldiers in the Second World War," 8:15 p.m. at a special Kabbalat Shabbat service at Congregation Habonim, 5 Glen Park Ave.

Saturday, Jan. 25

KIDS RULE THE SHUL
Kids ages two to 10 lead programming with parents, breakfast bar, games and activities, 10:30 a.m.-noon, Chabad of Markham. Must register at chabadmarkham.org.

PLANTS AND ANIMALS SAVED
Author **Roy Doliner** discusses "Rebirth in Israel of Plants and Animals Thought to be Extinct," 8 p.m., BAYT, $10/$15. Register: bayt.ca.

Sunday, Jan. 26

CLUB CHAVERUT
The York Jazz Ensemble performs "The Best of Classical Jazz," 1:30 p.m., Beth David, $8/$12. RSVP: **Rose Haspel**, 905-764-8141.

JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY
Ruth Chernia, **Les Kelman**, **Rolf Lederer**, **Janet-Lee Nadas** and **Sharon Singer** discuss the merits and shortcomings of family tree software programs, 10:30 a.m., Shaarei Shomayim. Non-members $5. Details: jgstoronto.ca or 647-247-6414.

Toronto students participate in Jump for Chai last month, to raise funds for Chai Lifeline, which supports families with seriously ill children.

Monday, Jan. 27

WINTER FILM AFTERNOONS
The movie *Prosecuting Evil: The Extraordinary World of Ben Ferencz*, will be shown at Beth Tzedec, 1 p.m., $5 donation for Out of the Cold program requested. RSVP: 416-781-3511.

HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE
Peter Weinwurm shares the story of his mother, who spent three years in Auschwitz, in "White Daisy, a Story of Helena Weinwurm," 7:30 p.m., Holy Blossom. $10 for non-members.

ROSH HODESH
The Song Shul's Rosh Hodesh group for women meets, 11:30 a.m., with **Aliza Spiro**. $10 for non-members. Contact info@songshul.com for location.

Deadline:
The deadline for the Feb. 6 paper is Jan. 27. All deadlines are at noon. Phone: 416-391-1836 ext. 269; email: **whatsnewcjn@gmail.com**.

Tuesday, Jan. 28

TUESDAY STUDY GROUPS
- **Rabbi Philip Scheim** discusses "Assisted Suicide," 10:30 a.m., Beth David.
- **Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner** is the speaker at a Women of Adath study group breakfast at 9:30 a.m. Non-members, $10 per session. Info: **Marjorie**, 416-780-9156.

THE ANTI-SEMITISM TOOLBOX
Irving Weisdorf (CAEF), **Corey Margolese** (Jteach.ca), **Aviva Polonsky** (Federation of Teachers in Hebrew Schools of Toronto) and **Lauren Isaacs** (Herut Canada) discuss anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism, 7:30-9:30 p.m., Chabad Romano, 10500 Bathurst St. Free. Register: Jewsagainstantisemitismcanada@gmail.com.

Wednesday, Jan. 29

MANY LIVES, ONE PEOPLE
The Song Shul's series on Jews around the world continues, 7 p.m., Barbara Frum Library, 20 Covington Rd. Free. Info: songshul.com.

JUDAISM'S GIFTS TO THE WORLD
Rabbi Chaim Hildeshaim teaches a six-session course on "Judaism's Gifts to the World," 8 p.m., Chabad Russian Centre of Thornhill Woods. Info: 905-881-1919 or jewishthornhillwoods.org.

JEWISH SPIRITUALITY SEMINAR
Rabbi Michael Skobac discusses "Jewish Prayer and Meditation: Connecting With God," 7:30 p.m., Village Shul. Free. RSVP: 416-789-0020, or carol@jewsforjudaism.org.

HOW A POEM MOVES
Prof. Adam Sol discusses "How a Jewish Poem Moves," 7:30 p.m., Holy Blossom Temple. $10 for non-members.

Et Cetera

CANCER SUPPORT
Cancer support for Jewish women, including social programs, educational events and resources can be found at L'Chaim. Info: 416-630-0203, or lchaim@ncjwctoronto.org.

SCHOLARSHIPS
Beth Tzedec Men's Club offers scholarships to students pursuing programs of higher Jewish education.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Applicants do not need to be a member of Beth Tzedec. Details: 416-781-3511, or hershr@rogers.com.

CONVERSATIONAL HEBREW
Pride of Israel Synagogue offers three levels of *ulpan*-method lessons, daytime or evening. Info: 416-226-0111 ext. 201.

BLUE JEAN SHABBAT
Beth Tikvah hosts a casual Friday night dinner featuring the Ruach Singers, Jan. 31, 6 p.m. RSVP by Jan. 23: 416-221-3433.

CAREGIVING STUDY
Baycrest is looking at the experiences of men 80 and older who are caring for a wife with dementia. Participation involves two to three interviews, in person or on the phone. Contact **Ifah**, 416-946-3724 or iarbel@research.baycrest.org.

BRAIN AGING PROJECT
Baycrest is looking for adults aged 60-85 who are noticing changes to their memory and/or thinking skills, for a study. Must be available for three testing sessions at Baycrest and 10 weekly training sessions at local community centres. Call **Yael**, 416-785-2500 ext. 3377.

PLAYTIME NURSERY
Playtime Nursery's Bubbie and Me program at Beth Sholom has opened registration for September 2020. Call **Sharon**, 416-518-8601.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED
- Baycrest is looking for volunteers, contact 416-785-2500 ext. 2572 or volunteer@baycrest.org.
- Beit Halochem, Aid to Disabled Veterans of Israel is seeking hosts to welcome veterans into their homes this spring. Details: 905-695-0611 or beithalochem.ca.

For Seniors

- **Bernard Betel Centre**, 416-225-2112. Jan. 28, **Myriam Shechter** discusses "Great Composers Writing Comedy: Mozart," 10 a.m., $4.25/$8.50; Jan. 30, wellness lecture on "Walkable Communities," 1:30 p.m., free. Register now for a course on the rise of populism, nationalism and autocratic regimes, Feb. 6-March 26, $68/$136. Register: **Sharon**, ext. 124.
- **Holy Blossom.** Pianist **Steve Koven** is the guest, Jan. 27. Program includes exercise and lunch, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., $3/$5.

Prosserman JCC

Donald Gales Family Pavilion on the Sherman Campus, 4588 Bathurst St., 416-638-1881 ext. 4020; prossermanjcc.com.

- Experience World Cultures Through Classical Music starts Jan. 24, 11 a.m.: Connecting With Technology starts Jan. 27, 11 a.m.; **Shlomo Schwartzberg** discusses "Movies From Outside North America," four weeks, Wednesdays until Feb. 5, 1-4 p.m.
- Shalom Singers Choir, a non-auditioned choir that performs in the community meets Mondays at 2 p.m.; supervised mah-jong meets Wednesdays at 1 p.m.; drop-in duplicate bridge, Thursdays at 12:30 p.m.
- Ongoing programs include Israeli folk dancing, choir, Yiddish conversation and more.

Miles Nadal JCC

750 Spadina Ave., 416-924-6211, mnjcc.org.

- Tu b'Shevat Groove: Crafts, songs and games for kids up to 10 years old and adults, Feb. 2, 2:30-4:30 p.m., Artscape Wychwood Barns, 601 Christie St. Register via eventbrite.ca. Free.
- Jewish&'s Tu b'Shevat Crafternoon, Feb. 8, 3-5 p.m., for children three to 10 and adults. Register via eventbrite.ca. $5.
- Valentine's jazz concert featuring the Ault Sisters, Feb. 13, 1 p.m., followed by reception at 2:30 p.m., $12.
- MNJCC Singalong, Feb. 12, 1 p.m., $8. No conductor, no sheet music, no pressure. Register: Ext. 250.
- Strength of Self, alternating Mondays, 11 a.m. A program for women who have experienced abuse. Call ext. 147.
- Shabbat Song Circle, Fridays at 10:30 a.m., for children up to age four with an adult. Ext. 390.
- The New Hollywood of the 1960s and '70s with film critic **Adam Nayman**, Mondays to Feb 10, 1:30 p.m. Register: ext. 155.
- *Storefront Stories*, archival photos presented by the Ontario Jewish Archives, Blankenstein Family Heritage Centre, in the Gallery at the J until Feb. 3; *When I Walk Among Trees*, photos by **Theresa Bryson** on the third floor until March 1.
- **Seniors Arts and Culture**, ext. 155, lisar@mnjcc.org. **Cantor Sidney Ezer** and **Asher Farber** celebrate Shabbat in song, Jan. 24, 12:30 p.m. Free (includes kosher lunch). Advance registration required at ext. 0. Meet the artist event: *The House of Martin Guerre* (in concert), featuring members of Toronto Musical Concerts, Jan. 30, 1 p.m., $5.
- **Seniors Fitness**, ext. 521. Start Here, a free community wellness integration program designed to provide peer support, community engagement and learning and recovery opportunities. Agency referral required. Call ext. 574.
- Michael Bernstein Chapel holds services Thursdays at 7:15 a.m. and Sundays at 8 a.m. Info: **Coleman**, 416-968-0200.

Schwartz/Reisman Centre

Joseph and Wolf Lebovic JCC, 9600 Bathurst St., 905-303-1821. Contact **Andrea** for info: andrea@srcentre.ca, or ext. 3006.

- Celebrate Tu b'Shevat with **Yael** and **Ravid** and JNF, with crafts, games and more, Feb. 10, 5-7 p.m.
- Programs for people with Parkinson's: boxing classes, contact yorkregion@rsbaffilate.com; cycling program, Thursdays at 1:30 p.m., contact stephen@srcentre.ca; mindfulness, contact melissa@theyogapath.ca.
- Drop-in duplicate bridge, Tuesdays at 6:45 p.m.
- Recreational programs for children, teens and young adults with autism spectrum disorder, contact karina@srcentre.ca, or ext. 3042.

Jewish Family & Child

Groups are open to all members of the community. A sliding scale is offered for those who need fee reductions. Registration required. Call **Shawna Sidney**, 416-638-7800 ext. 6215, or jfandcs.com/groups.

- High-Conflict Divorce: a workshop for parents to develop strategies to deal with a high-conflict situation. Not for those in an abusive situation. Jan. 28, 7-9 p.m., 4600 Bathurst St. ■

Mazel Tov

Email your digital photos along with a description of 25 words or less to **jgreen@thecjn.ca** or go online to **www.CJNews.com/mazeltov.**

AUTHORS & POETS

THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
CJN

Annual Passover Literary Supplement

We invite readers to submit unpublished, original short stories or poetry that explore Jewish themes.

They should not exceed 2,000 words. Selected submissions will appear in the Passover Supplement of The CJN on April 2, 2020. Not all submissions can be published, and not all those selected will appear in both Toronto and Montreal editions. We look for originality. Please don't send more than three entries.

We cannot correspond with contributors.

Deadline for submissions is Feb. 28, 2020 at noon

E-mail submissions to:

cjnliterarysupplement@gmail.com

We can only accept email submissions. We prefer Word documents.

Secret Hitler board game removed from Montreal stores

CJN STAFF

A Montreal retailer removed the board game Secret Hitler from its shelves after B'nai Brith Canada notified the manager that it has received complaints.

While not condemning the game as anti-Semitic, which has been on the market worldwide since 2016, B'nai Brith regional director Harvey Levine said, "This is a sensitive issue with the Jewish population and with families of those affected by the Holocaust," especially so in the wake of recent violent anti-Semitic incidents.

The store is Tour de Jeux in the Fairview Shopping Centre in Pointe-Claire, whose owner quickly removed Secret Hitler from the other two outlets in the Montreal area on Jan. 12 after the B'nai Brith complaint.

Set in the German Reichstag in 1933, Secret Hitler is manufactured by Breaking Games and distributed by Blackbox globally. Players take on the adversarial roles in teams of liberals or fascists, one of whom is Hitler.

The game's designer, the American Max Temkin, who is Jewish, has denied in the past any attempt to trivialize Hitler or the Holocaust. On the contrary, the creators claim the goal is to raise awareness of the dangers of fascism.

Tour de Jeux began selling the game before the holidays. The game is still available online and in other stores in Canada. ■

The set-up for the Secret Hitler game from a YouTube instructional video.

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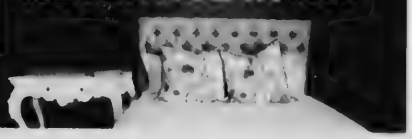

Nili Couzens: Spreading Jewish wisdom

MARILYN LAZAR
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Nili Couzens is a teacher and international motivation speaker who has been addressing audiences around the world for over 20 years. She was recently in Toronto to discuss "How to Raise a Jewish Mensch" at the Jewish Family Institute.

How do you transcend Jewish denominations?

I break archaic, obsolete stereotypes as a religious woman speaking in front of thousands of people. I hope I explain things in a fun, accessible way, but I didn't make these ideas up. The universal appeal is ancient Jewish wisdom. The Jewish people have been at this thing called life for over 3,500 years. We deal in wisdom – that's how we roll. They call us the people of the Book because we wrote it all down. Jewish wisdom has probably covered your issue before – you're not alone out there.

My ultimate goal is that people add Jewish wisdom to their resources. Check with Brene Brown, Oprah, Google, your friend, your spouse, then wonder what Judaism has to say about it.

Little has changed about what people want over the millenniums. The human soul wants what it always wanted: love, genuine contribution, friendship, peace. Some things are timeless. Torah is one.

Are you rationalizing outdated concepts about gender relations?

The biggest misconception in Judaism is that the Torah is full of dusty Bible stories about men. The Torah is written in code. Reading it requires cracking that code. The Torah talks about mistakes our greatest leaders made and how women set the Jewish people back on the right path. It's overwhelmingly pro-women.

There's a saying: "Most Jews walk away from Judaism not because of what they know, but because of what they don't know." Mark Twain said, "It ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble. It's what you know for sure that just ain't so."

When you teach a Jew Torah, it resonates deeply. Jews don't always know that much about Judaism. Sometimes we think we do because we went to Hebrew school. But most kids hated Hebrew school, were forced to go and "graduated" at 13. Our general education continues, but our Jewish education stays on the level of a reluctant 13-year-old. We're sadly almost illiterate as a people.

My husband said Jewish educators open the door, but you only walk through if you want to. Once Jews starts learning, they recognize wisdom. They naturally want more. Who doesn't want wisdom?

Your website includes this quote by Thomas Edison: "If we did all the things we are capable of, we would literally astound ourselves." What astounds you?

Everything: a sunrise, that the Jewish people are back in Israel. I wish we'd stop playing small and blow it out already. Live like you matter – because you do. We could change the world if people just took themselves seriously. I believe people are incredibly powerful and don't know it.

What are the similarities and differences between audiences?

The more I travel, the more I recognize we're all the same. Everyone wants love, peace, meaning, happiness.

How do you make Torah relatable?

When you read the story and look for humanity, it jumps out at you. I also look for the emotion in the stories. For example, Noah was scared to build the ark. His level of greatness required him to step out of his comfort zone and do the right thing, even if it looked bizarre. Who can't relate to that? We've all been in situations where we knew better than the people around us and had to step out of line to do the right thing.

Nili Couzens

How do you find balance in life?

My husband and I work together to support each other's priorities. Family is first, everything else is a far second. There was a time when I felt like I was mediocre at everything and was barely keeping it together. So I stopped teaching until my kids were in school and then went back. There's a saying: you can do it all, just not all at once. I think if you have enough patience to realize there are seasons in life, you can find balance long term. Sometimes you have to think in hours, sometimes in days, sometimes in years. Have confidence that you're doing the right thing *now*.

What drew you to this work?

I always wanted to teach adults. While I was figuring out what to do, I went to Israel to pursue Jewish studies for personal growth and fell in love with it. Although I loved English literature, at the end of the day, who really cares what Shakespeare said? With Torah, everything was relevant, real, honest, passionate. Everyone deeply cared about the process and the search for truth. My teaching organically developed from there.

What's your favourite part of what you do?

Making a difference. Seeing someone's eyes light up during class or nod unconsciously when they hear truth. I have all the handwritten notes from women thanking me for teaching them something valuable. It's a privilege.

What's your hope for the future?

That, in Israel, we all just get along and knock it off. Peace will reign and there will be room for God if we can just stop bickering.

What would you like readers to know about Jewish living?

Pirkei Avot says the crown of wisdom is lying in the street for anyone to pick up. Jewish wisdom is available to anyone who wants to learn. It's not some elusive club on a mountaintop. Once you start learning, different mitzvot will speak to different people. Try a little of this and a little of that. It's not a commitment to try a mitzvah. Growth is simpler than you think: do Shabbat for 10 minutes, eat kosher once. It's not all or nothing. ■

This interview has been edited and condensed for style and clarity.

Sonny Goldstein, CFP
President

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Pre-state Israel's remarkable hydroelectric project

JACOB SIVAK

October 2019 marked 25 years since the signing of the peace agreement between Israel and Jordan. The anniversary is significant with regard to two small parcels of land, one on Israel's northern border with Jordan, and the other on the southern border in the Arava Valley. The treaty recognized that both areas belong to the Kingdom of Jordan. However, existing Israeli farming activity was allowed to continue in these areas for 25 years, without the imposition of border formalities. Jordan has now decided to discontinue this arrangement, as was its right under the provisions of the agreement.

The northern parcel of land, just south of the Kinneret (Sea of Galilee), is located at the junction of the Jordan River and its largest tributary, the Yarmouk River, a location known in Hebrew as Naharayim. For about five years during the mid-1930s, Kibbutz Ashdot Yaakov, located just north of this junction and east of the Jordan River, was my parents' home.

They made aliyah from Canada and returned to Canada in the late '30s, after becoming disenchanted with kibbutz life. At that time, several men from the kibbutz, known by its temporary name Gesher (not to be confused with today's nearby Kibbutz Gesher), worked on construction projects for Solel Boneh, a co-operative founded by the Histadrut, the national labour union. My father's job involved calculating and cutting rebar, the steel rods used to reinforce concrete.

One of the projects he worked on was the nearby Rutenberg hydroelectric power station. At the time, it was one of the largest construction projects in Palestine, a project that took six years to complete and involved, at its peak, 3,000 workers. Pincus Rutenberg, a Russian-Jewish engineer, made use of the drop in elevation of the Jordan River as it flows south from the Kinneret to construct a power station that for a time supplied most of the electricity needs of both Palestine and Transjordan.

As described by Shmuel Avitzur, the founder of the Avshalom Institute for Land of Israel Studies, the complex included an ingenious series of canals and dams designed to ensure that the flow of water to the turbines wasn't affected by lower water levels during the summers.

The outflow of the Jordan River from the Kinneret was controlled with a dam named after nearby Kibbutz Degania, and another dam further south, near present-day Ashdot Yaakov. The outflow of the Yarmouk was dammed, as well, which resulted in the creation of a large artificial lake. At peak conditions, the fall of water to the turbines was 27 metres, a little more than half the height of Niagara Falls.

> *The complex included an ingenious series of canals and dams*

Much of the power plant was destroyed during the 1948 War of Independence, when the dams and sluices were opened to block the advance of the Iraqi and Jordanian armies. The bulk of the 600 hectares that made up the complex ended up in Jordan, except for a tract of about 70 hectares of farmland that remained in Israel until the peace treaty was signed.

To commemorate the treaty, a part of this land was set aside as a park called the Island of Peace, which until now was open to Israeli tourists. Tragically, in 1997, a deranged Jordanian soldier opened fire on a group of visiting Israeli schoolchildren from the town of Beit Shemesh, killing seven and wounding six. In a brave and touching act, the late king Hussein of Jordan visited with the children's families to express his remorse.

Even before 1948, the energy provided by the Naharayim hydro plant was gradually overtaken by electricity from steam turbines powered mainly by coal, making Israel dependent on coal imports for decades. Today, most of Israel's energy is provided by electricity generated using natural gas from its own fields located off its Mediterranean coast.

Israel's prowess in developing new technology during the past two decades has earned it the nickname "Startup Nation." In fact, important technological advances took place even before independence and for a time, most of the country's electricity was generated by hydroelectric power, a renewable resource. ■

Jacob Sivak is a distinguished professor emeritus at the University of Waterloo.

Dear Rabby

Overcoming a fear of commitment

Rabbi Yisroel Bernath

Dear Rabbi Bernath,

I've been seeing Lindsey for almost a year now. We get along and have a great connection. Marriage is on our minds and we've been discussing it on and off. At one point, it became clear that she wanted to marry me, and the ball was in my court. Ever since then, I've been frozen and indecisive. I started to worry about different aspects of her personality and I've been asking for advice from many people.

At one point, I went to see a dating coach and she said it was "a divorce waiting to happen." I told my girlfriend I would not marry her and within a few minutes, I regretted the decision I had made. We're talking now and she understands what I'm going through.

It seems like she is what I really want, but how do I get past my fear?

Joshua

Dear Joshua,

Thank you for asking the million-dollar question. This is the most common issue I hear talked about in relationships: the "C-word." Commitment is a big issue – especially for men, for some reason.

Even though it's an age-old question, I'll try to give as fresh an answer as I can.

It seems like by having made the "wrong" choice – apparently by being talked into it – you discovered your true feelings. This is one of the reasons for having a period of engagement. You get to try the commitment on before you actually stand under the huppah. You get to see if it feels right in your heart.

As a side note, I'm shocked that somebody who calls themselves a "coach" would have made such a decision for you. Obviously, you were advice-shopping, looking for someone to tell you "no," so you wouldn't have to decide for yourself.

But still, that should have been patently obvious to anyone who dispenses advice about relationships. And giving someone a final answer like that should only be done very rarely.

But I digress. Let's talk about how we can make commitment a little less daunting.

We'll begin with a story. There was once a gentile king with a Jewish adviser (as was common). The king asked his adviser: "Why do you, as a Jew, need so many commitments? Don't they restrict you? Don't you want to feel free?"

The adviser answered by asking the king to join him on the roof of the palace. Once there, he asked the king to approach the edge of the roof, as close to the end as he could.

The king – who was not accustomed to such dizzying heights – could not get to the edge of the roof. So the adviser asked him to return there in a few days. In the meantime, the Jewish adviser got to work.

When the king came back, he saw that his adviser had fulfilled the mitzvah of building a parapet, a barrier to protect one from falling (this is an actual mitzvah in the book of Deuteronomy).

The adviser once again told the king to approach the edge of the roof and this time, the king was able to go right up to the edge. The lesson was obvious.

You think that by committing to someone or something, you will lose your freedom. You will be stuck. But the opposite is true. Right now, you are stuck. You just don't know it, because you're in the middle of the roof.

If you ever decide to go to the edge – to grow as a person spiritually, or even emotionally – you will be afraid to fall. And rightly so – because without making a commitment to someone, you can easily lose yourself in the process of changing and growing.

The paradox is that once you have committed to someone, you will be more free to push yourself to your limits, and for your life to change and expand in ways you couldn't imagine right now.

So embrace it – it will make you a freer man on the inside, and therefore, a happier man on the outside. ■

Have a question for Rabbi Bernath? Email him at rabbi@jewishndg.com

OBITUARIES AND RELATED NOTICES

STEELES MEMORIAL CHAPEL

Ulrich, Sheila	December 27, 2019	79 Samuel Oster Ave
Gelbart, Paula	December 30, 2019	7 Brett Ave
Gringler, Thomas	December 31, 2019	20 Dewlane Dr
Braude, Lily	January 1, 2020	116 Alameda Circle
Kitaychik, Nina	January 1, 2020	Private
Tulchinsky, Helen	January 2, 2020	Private
Flom, Richard Jeffrey	January 3, 2020	Private
Brasg, Colin	January 2, 2020	115 Mulholland Dr
Schofield, William Arthur	January 3, 2020	269 Blue Grass Blvd
Fenyves, Frank	January 3, 2020	85 Skymark Dr
Levin, Leonid	January 4, 2020	21 Barrhill Rd
Gray, Nina	January 4, 2020	62 Worth Blvd
Sidenberg, Fay	January 7, 2020	65 Skymark Dr
Roiter, Bela	January 7,2020	Private
Ospalak, Paul Ivan	January 7,2020	11 Bunty Lane
Weisberg, Rosa	January 8, 2020	14 Coreydale Court
Markus, Joseph Sidney	January 8,2020	145 Edmund Seager Dr
Cooper, Freda	January 8, 2020	85 Skymark Dr
Levy, Esther	January 9, 2020	58 Jenny Thompson Court
Brik, Soybel	January 9, 2020	Private
Abecassis, Jacques	January 11, 2020	29 Renoir Dr
Borochovitz, Louis	January 11, 2020	1271 Creekside Dr
Rosenzweig, Eli	January 11, 2020	8 Tokay Crt
Morgan, Helen	January 11, 2020	449 Walmer Rd
Bobrowsky, Lillian Doris	January 11, 2020	63 Charleswood Dr
Lilchitskaya, Regina	January 12, 2020	91 Townsgate Dr
Jacobs, Paul	January 13, 2020	350 Lonsdale Rd
Bodik, Zakhariy	January 13, 2020	63 Macarthur Dr
Ritche, Helen	January 13, 2020	3 Carnegie Cres
Bocher, Rachel	January 13, 2020	300 Antibes Dr
Wise, Barbara Laura	January 13, 2020	41 Spadina Rd

BENJAMIN'S PARK MEMORIAL CHAPEL

Esther Sofer	Dec 30/19	87 Old Colony Road
Gdalja Gorfinkel	Jan 9/20	484 Steeles Avenue West
Joseph (Joe) Gerskup	Jan 10/20	65 Skymark Drive
Sarah Goldstein	Jan 9/20	6 Denmark Crescent
Morris Azmier	Jan 8/20	33 Bankfield Drive
Sonia Traves	Jan 10/20	42 Cavotti Crescent
Mary Enzsol	Jan 8/20	484 Steeles Avenue West
Millie Giddens	Jan 10/20	25 Brunswick Avenue
Michael Posluns	Jan 10/20	36 Lauder Avenue
Joyce Freesman	Jan 9/20	8 Quail Valley Drive
Paul Szabo	Jan 10/20	900 Mt. Pleasant Road
Allan Golombek	Jan 9/20	44 Charles Street West
Bonnie Farache	Jan 12/20	233 Beecroft Road
David Bisgould	Jan 12/20	7 Townsgate Drive
Don Casselman	Jan 12/20	3560 Bathurst Street
Marvelle Koffler	Jan 14/20	1066 Avenue Road
Anne Kleiner	Jan 12/20	3560 Bathurst Street
Faye Arnold	Jan 13/20	7071 Bayview Avenue
Patricia Dumbroff	Jan 14/20	110 Promenade Circe
Garry Goodman	Jan 10/20	224 Goulding Avenue
Esther Rosen	Jan 14/20	306 Finch Avenue East

All obits appearing as a list are provided by the funeral homes. For any missing obituary in the list, please contact the funeral home directly.

For information on placing a separate paid obituary, unveiling or card of thanks, please call 416-391-1836

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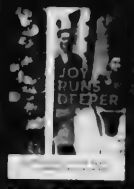


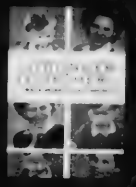
Bronia Beker and Joseph Beker

Max Bornstein

Felicia Carmelly

Tommy Dick

Marian Domanski


Ibolya Grossman

Anna Molnár Hegedüs

Rabbi Pinchas Hirschprung

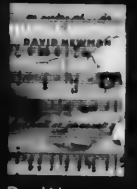
Bronia Jablon

Helena Jockel

Alex Levin

Fred Mann

Leslie Meisels



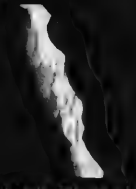
David Newman

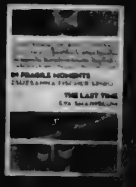
Arthur Ney

Felix Opatowski

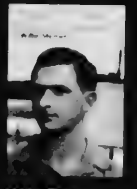
Betty Rich

Judith Rubinstein


Martha Salcudean


Zsuzsanna Spiro

George Stern


Wilio Sterner

Ann Szedlecki

William Tannenzapf

Elsa Thon

Joseph Tomasov

Anka Vobicky

Sam Weisberg

Ita Demon
Ida Dimant
Fela Grachnik
Suzanne (Katz) Reich
Barbara Kuper
Helen Mahul
Catherine Matyas

Dyna Persimuter
Gitla Popovsky
Kome Schachter Rogel
Rebekah Schneider-Katz
Babey Widutschinsky Trepman
Mina Wolkowicz
Irene Zoberman

László Lang
Helen Rodak Izso
Moishe Rosenschein
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Remembering what unites us all

Canada's Governor General attends Shoah forum. **PAGE 12**
PLUS: Auschwitz 75. **PAGES 19-20**

The deal of the century?

Netanyahu, Gantz meet with Trump, as Palestinian leaders reject peace plan. **PAGES 24-25**

Land of milk, honey ... and whisky

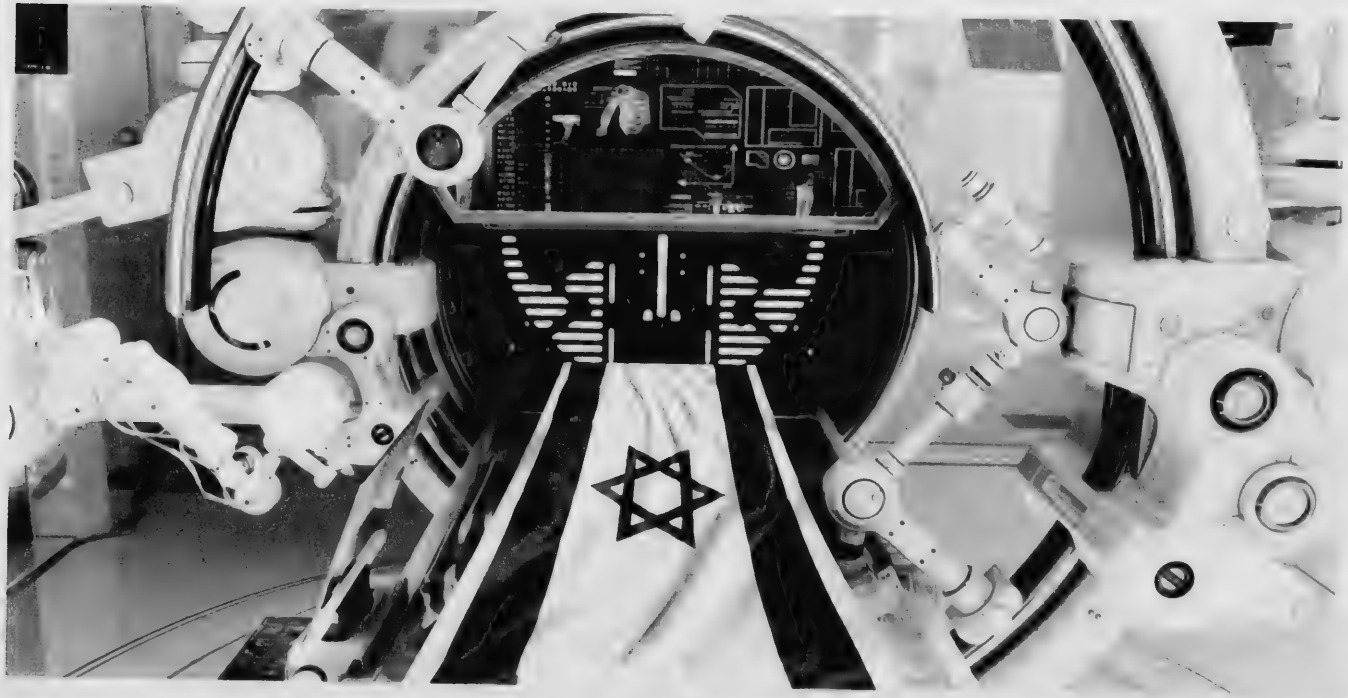
How a group of Israeli tech moguls turned a hobby into a burgeoning industry. **PAGE 28**

It's a (Jewish) dog's life

My father always said he wanted to come back to life as a canine in a Jewish home. **PAGE 7**

ON A MEDICAL MISSION

Israeli technology is finding a home in the Canadian health system. **PAGE 8**



CANDLELIGHTING, HAVDALAH TIMES

Halifax	5:03 p.m.	6:09 p.m.
Montreal	4:40 p.m.	5:47 p.m.
Ottawa	4:49 p.m.	5:56 p.m.
Toronto	5:08 p.m.	6:14 p.m.
Winnipeg	5:03 p.m.	6:14 p.m.
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Quotable

66 *Reuven Rivlin is the president of the Zionist occupation army*

— Virtual assistant Siri's answer to a question about the Israeli president, until Apple was alerted to the wording, and changed it.

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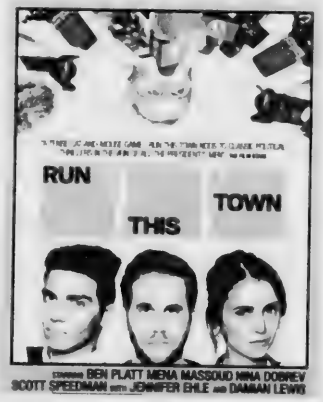
Trending

Releasing the 'Rob Ford' movie

Ben Platt, whose Broadway stardom was solidified with *Dear Evan Hansen*, will find out if Canadian cinema can do the same for his career once *Run This Town* is released in theatres on March 6. The movie drew initial attention due to its backdrop of former Toronto mayor Rob Ford's crack-smoking scandal; journalist Robyn Doolittle snarked about how her parallel was being played by a male, but Platt clarified that he plays a fictionalized reporter. The attention exasperated writer-director Ricky Tollman, who premiered the effort last year at the SXSW Festival in Austin, Texas, rather than Toronto.



The man who questioned Yentl

Jon Peters was a Hollywood hairdresser whose clients included Barbra Streisand: a wig that he designed for her in 1973 was an overture to a long relationship, professionally consummated with a remake of *A Star is Born*. While subsequent stardom was largely steered by Peters, the Cherokee-Italian wasn't so into *Yentl*, and advised her to drop her obsession with the adaptation of a story by Isaac Bashevis Singer in favour of more lucrative concert dates. When she tried on the male disguise, he changed his mind. And while he described Streisand as the "love of his life" three years ago, Peters secretly married another old flame on Jan. 20: Pamela Anderson.

Dreams of the BiWay revival

Mal Coven, who co-founded eccentric Canadian discount chain BiWay in 1962, promised a refreshed retailing vision last year: "BiWay $10 Store" would sell single or multiple items with that round-number price tag. A location was promised with signs in a Toronto plaza window, at 5990 Bathurst St. But those plans have now pivoted: Coven promises a first store twice its size, on the city's popular discount strip, Orfus Road. The retail mogul, who recently turned 91, told *Retail Insider* that his partnerships include a kosher food brand. The new national ambition also has to compete with strange nostalgia for the BiWay that shuttered in 2001. ■

Compiled by Marc Weisblott of CJN Today, our email newsletter. CJNews.com/today.

Gematria

5

The number of ultra-Orthodox children born to an unnamed transgender woman in Manchester, England, who gave up the legal fight due to fear of them being shunned in their own community.

15

The amount of time in minutes that Norman Greenbaum says that he spent writing the lyrics to "Spirit in the Sky," in a 50th anniversary interview with Rolling Stone. He's mostly lived off royalties from the song ever since.

50

The age at which actor Jeff Goldblum's great-grandfather Abraham Temeles left his hometown of Zloczow, Poland, later boarding a ship for Halifax, as outlined on PBS genealogy show *Finding Your Roots*.

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Letters to the Editor

Defending Trump

I take great offence to the comments that Bernie Farber made about U.S. President Donald Trump ("Adding fuel to the anti-Semitic fire," Jan. 23).

His description of Trump is completely one-sided and false. How can he call a president who is the most pro-Jewish president in recent history a racist narcissist who embraces some of the worst anti-Semitic tropes?

Farber doesn't seem to know the difference between kibitzing and being serious. Either that, or he actually attempted to paint Trump in the worst possible light.

Trump just signed an executive order about anti-Semitism on campuses, saying that schools that promote anti-Semitism in any way will not receive federal funding.

As well, Trump has committed to moving the American Embassy to Jerusalem, has said that the Golan Heights are considered Israeli territory and that Judea and Samaria should not be considered occupied Palestinian territory.

Beverley Ballett
Toronto

In her recent book *How to Fight Anti-Semitism*, author Bari Weiss identifies three current strains of Jew-hatred: the extreme right (of the Charlottesville, Va., variety), the extreme left (of the Jeremy Corbyn sort) and Islamic.

But there's another type of Jew-hatred, and it is one that many in the media have been more than a little reluctant to identify. It is the ongoing and often vicious anti-Semitism being perpetrated by African-Americans and/or Hispanics themselves members of victim/identity groups against visibly Orthodox Jews in the New York City area.

The anti-Semites who attacked Jews in Monsey, N.Y., and Newark, N.J., were not white supremacists; they weren't even white. They were – all three of them – African-American. The failure to acknowledge that inconvenient reality and to try to pin the blame for these violent outbursts on Donald Trump is as unhelpful as it is dangerously myopic.

Mindy Alter
Toronto

Holocaust education

Avrum Rosensweig writes, "Enough of just remembering (the Holocaust). Activism is what will protect us and sustain us" ("The failure of Holocaust education," Jan. 16).

Activism is exactly the mandate that has been pursued for years by organizations such as the Canadian Society for Yad Vashem, the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies, the Sarah and Chaim Neuberger Holocaust Education Centre, and FAST (Fighting Antisemitism Together).

Part of their mandate has always been educating the Canadian public, both gentile and Jewish, including students, about the Shoah so they will understand the origins and evils of genocide. But make no mistake, education is an essential part of activism.

We should also not forget the brave and resolute Canadian survivors who have gone back to Germany to testify against the perpetrators. Recognition of their activism can never be overstated.

Israel Mida
Toronto

Letters to the editor can be emailed to cjninfo@gmail.com. All letters must bear the sender's name, address and telephone number. We reserve the right to edit and condense letters.

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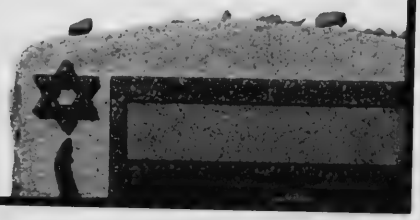

Rabbi2Rabbi

Great expectations

Congregations demand a lot of their rabbis, anticipating both charismatic and scholarly leadership. However, Judaism's decentralized model allows for the division of responsibilities.

RABBI AVI FINEGOLD
FOUNDER, THE JEWISH LEARNING LAB, MONTREAL

RABBI PHILIP SCHEIM
BETH DAVID B'NAI ISRAEL BETH AM CONGREGATION, TORONTO

Scene from *The Two Popes*. NETFLIX

Rabbi Scheim: Notwithstanding its Roman Catholic underpinnings, the celebrated new film *The Two Popes* raises issues of relevance to the Jewish world. The contrast between the personalities and theology of former pope Benedict and Pope Francis reflect struggles we face as well.

There is the issue of the legitimacy of change in religious life – Benedict is resistant, Francis receptive – and the matter of how a religious leader should engage with his people, with Benedict isolating himself and Francis favouring constant company.

Our tendency, reflected in the screenplay, would be to prefer the modernist, sociable Francis over the rigid, reticent Benedict. But should we be more appreciative (even if we don't agree with them) of religious leaders who eschew popularity contests and uphold traditional standards? Is there something to be said for tenacity in an age of ever-changing values?

Rabbi Finegold: While I, too, found the film highly relevant to our religious life, I was drawn to a much older parallel. The Mishnaic model presented the Jewish community with *zugot*, pairs of leaders who had distinct roles. There was the *av beit din*, the head of the Supreme Court who had authority over the legal system, and the *nasi*, who was the political leader and had authority over the people.

Both held equal power, but one was in charge of the laws in the abstract – the theoretical framework that governed the land – and one was in charge of implementing the law and managing the bureaucracy of a functioning government and people. At some point, though, Judaism assumed that leaders had to have both qualities, and the two roles became one in the form of the community rabbi, who is supposed to fill two roles for everyone.

Even so, we should recognize that some leaders are Benedicts and some are Francises. We should value leaders for what they bring to the table, not fault them for what they are not.

Rabbi Scheim: My seminary days were highlighted by the presence of two rabbinic luminaries, Rabbi Louis Finkelstein, former chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), and talmudic scholar Rabbi Saul Lieberman.

Rabbi Finkelstein, who was featured on the cover of the Oct. 15, 1951 issue of *Time*, was the institution's link to the outside world, its popular exemplar, while Rabbi Lieberman's place was the academy, day and night engaged in Torah. For JTS to emerge as a major force in Jewish education, both Finkelstein and Lieberman were essential, even though each fulfilled very different functions.

Can one person be both a charismatic leader and super-scholar at the same time? Possibly, but likely while compromising either Torah scholarship, leadership or both. Thus, I agree with you that each partner in the pairing has much of value to contribute, some of which is bound to be lost in the melding of the two into one.

Rabbi Finegold: This message, that we need more than one type of leader, is one that our communities need to hear more than ever. Our congregations need to know that they cannot always expect to have a rabbi that is both. They need to actively seek out different leaders for different needs.

Thankfully, one of the best parts of Judaism is that we don't have a single pope that is supposed to be all things to everyone. We have myriad leaders with many points of view and many skills. No branch of Judaism looks to a single *gadol ha-dor* (generational leader) to answer every question and inspire every person. Our decentralized model allows for Hillels, Shammais, Finkelsteins, Liebermans, Feinsteins, Schneersons, Preisands and Hoffmans to be there for Jews, however they see themselves.

The message that rabbis can learn from *The Two Popes* is that, even if we lean heavily toward one direction, we must cultivate some part of ourselves that feeds the other direction.

As a wearer and big fan of red shoes, I was struck by the symbolic nature of such footwear in the film. It reminded me that even introverted, law-oriented leaders need to have their own "red shoes" as a way to live a little. And some boisterous, charismatic leaders sometimes need to shun those same "red shoes" in order to be more grounded. ■

thank you!

Todah rabah to our team of devoted volunteers whose hard work and dedication powered our 2019 Annual Campaign. Your leadership strengthens our community in so many ways.

A special thank you to the 2019 Campaign Chairs **Harley Mintz & Karen Simpson Radomski** and the 2019 Women's Philanthropy Chair **Leslie Richmond**

PHOTO FROM LEFT: Hartley Lefton, Shael Weinreb, Elise Stern Gropper, Leonard Abramsky, Zachary Goldman, Danielle Peters, Carey Tepperman, David Granovsky, Darren Sukonick, Alison Himel, Nolan Grubert, David Lubek, Dr. Carole Gruson, Joel Cuperfain, Carol Grubert, Jacob Iftah, Anthony Sigel, Noam Edell, Mark Segal, Karen Simpson Radomski, David Dulberg, Samuel Redlick, Harley Mintz, Jennie Kuretzky, Eric Carmona, Jeffrey Gottesman, Dr. John Spencer, Melissa Muskat, Max Weisbrod, Corinne Pruzanski, David Goodman, Ari Silverberg

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The muddled state of Holocaust education

A couple of months ago, the model and social media starlet Chrissy Teigen revealed a new tattoo to her nearly 28 million Instagram followers. The design featured a set of numbers running down the inside of her forearm, corresponding to the birthdays of her husband and children. But some viewers saw something different: "Yikes," wrote one, "really strong Holocaust vibes." "Should have thought this one through," another scolded. "Is anyone else a little bothered by the fact that she got a series of numbers on her forearm?" someone wondered aloud. "Is the Holocaust really that far removed from our reality? Anyone??"

It's a question that haunts Jews the world over, including here in Canada where so many of our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents arrived to rebuild their shattered lives after the Shoah. As we mark the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, though, the answer seems particularly unclear, perhaps more so than at any moment in the last three-quarters of a century.

How did we get to this point? Certainly not for lack of effort to educate the world about the horrors of the Shoah. In many ways, Holocaust education and awareness has never been more widespread and robust. The testaments to this reality appear in these pages on a regular basis: schools are working with Holocaust groups (the Toronto District School Board, for example, is dispersing almost 18,000 copies of the book *Hana's Suitcase* to every Grade 6 student in the city), cities, like Richmond, B.C., are increasingly adopting Holocaust remembrance initiatives; survivors continue to be honoured for their courage.

This is not only happening in Canada, of course. In England, the Duchess of Cambridge, Kate Middleton, has just revealed a set of portraits of Holocaust survivors and their families, photographed recently at Kensington Palace. They were some of the most "life-affirming people I've ever met," she said. Meanwhile in Germany last week, Foreign Minister Heiko Maas issued a warning that anti-Semitism has become "a daily occurrence" for the country's Jews, leading nearly half of them to say they are considering leaving for good.

> *Study after study indicates that Holocaust awareness and knowledge are languishing*

And yet, study after study indicates that Holocaust awareness and knowledge are languishing. A groundbreaking poll commissioned by the Azrieli Foundation and the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany, revealed exactly one year ago in *The CJN*, showed just how shockingly bad the situation is, with more than half of Canadians – and two-thirds of young people – not knowing that six million Jews died in the Shoah. Over a quarter of Canadians aged 18-34 who were surveyed believed less than two million were actually killed. "As it stands now, as a society, we are not preparing the next generation to learn from the past," Azrieli Foundation CEO Naomi Azrieli said in reaction. Indeed, the study indicated that almost six in 10 Canadians say fewer people care about the Holocaust now than they used to

Some say (including in these pages in recent weeks) that Holocaust education has lost the plot – that a nightmare scenario unique to the Jewish people has been universalized in order to teach young people about society's ills writ large, as opposed to the specific Jewish suffering it engendered, and continues to engender. Even so, you would like to think that the sheer magnitude of Shoah study would rub off. That it clearly has not may very well have something to do with how we've gone about trying to get the message across. But even so, it says much more about the people who haven't received it. Either way, it's our continuing challenge to get the point across, especially when it comes to young people. ■ — YONI

From the Archives

Remembering Auschwitz

ONTARIO JEWISH ARCHIVES, BLANKENSTEIN FAMILY HERITAGE CENTRE, UJA FEDERATION OF GREATER TORONTO

March of the Living participants support each other in a difficult moment while visiting the Auschwitz Museum, in Poland in 1994. Photograph by Nir Bareket.

SeeJN

Corona precaution

YONATAN SINDEL/FLASH90 PHOTO

A Chinese woman is taken to the Shaare Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem on Jan. 27 over suspicions she may be infected with the deadly flu-like coronavirus.

Essay

It's a (Jewish) dog's life

Elyse Tytel

My father always said he wanted to come back to life as a dog in a Jewish home. No one, he said, gets treated better. He wasn't kidding.

Growing up my siblings and I constantly begged for a pet dog. My mother was allergic – or at least that was the excuse for years. Until, suddenly, it wasn't. I'm not sure what prompted the change, but lo and behold one day we had a puppy, a beautiful grey miniature schnauzer who immediately became my mother's constant companion. The dog would follow her around all day, curling up against her in bed at night. My mother didn't seem to mind.

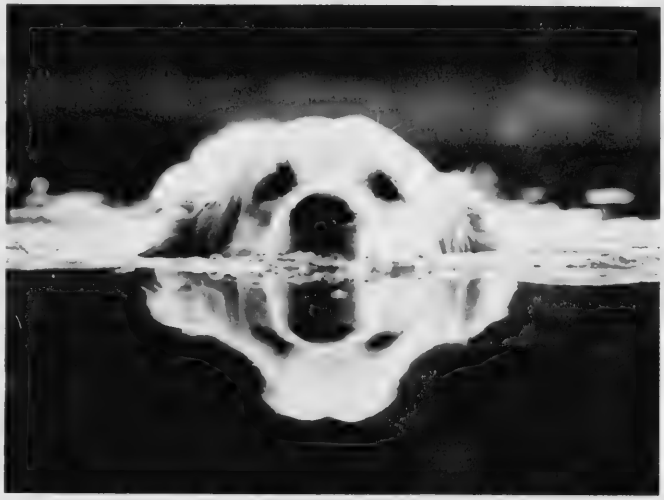
In fact, it wasn't long before we had a second miniature schnauzer in our house.

My father was thrilled. He grew up with a pet dog and was happy to have one (or two!) again. But gone were the days of keeping the dog outside, or even off the couch (or out of the bed). My father watched my mother treat those dogs like little princesses.

Now, I'm not just talking dog beds and chew toys. I distinctly remember my mother venturing out into a virtual blizzard to barbecue beef ribs for the dogs. My brother came home from school looking for a snack and was severely admonished for trying to take a bite out of one of the dog's ribs. We got broiled hamburgers instead.

My father knew what he was talking about.

Jews and dogs have a complicated relationship. While the Torah does not expressly prohibit the keeping of dogs as pets, biblical and rabbinic sources do include numerous references that associate dogs with violence and uncleanliness and frown on the practice of keeping them in one's home. But really, it could be argued that caring for a dog is, in fact, a very Jewish thing to do. Dogs require daily feeding, exercise and grooming. Taking on that responsibility is compassionate - a pretty 'mensch-y' thing to do. After all, that dog is never going to feed you or clean up after you. But if you need to vent about something or someone, a dog will never judge you.



Caring for a dog is a very Jewish act, Elyse Tytel writes. PIXABAY PHOTO

My father knew all this, and maybe that's why he felt like he wanted to come back as a dog in a Jewish house. And maybe that's also why, since his passing some 26 years ago, I have always had a dog in my house.

My husband and I got our first dog right after we got back from our honeymoon. Roxy was a gorgeous golden retriever with a wonderful temperament and uncanny ability to hold her head underwater for seemingly impossible lengths of time.

When we had kids, rather than feeling threatened by them, Roxy felt protective of them. From day one she would guard our babies like her own, always placing herself between the kids and any strangers. She was gentle with them, letting them pull her hair, bop her in the nose or tug at her tail with only a sideways glance thrown at me or my husband, as if to say, "You see how much I love them?"

One day my son was swimming in the lake and got a cramp. He looked a little distressed. Before my husband and I could even react, Roxy was in the water, offering her tail and towing him back to shore.

When Roxy's time finally came it was tough. The kids were upset and crying, as were we, but we all learned how to cope during the bereavement process - another very Jewish thing, by the way. We made a donation, buried her in her favourite place (the cottage) and even recited a special prayer our rabbi gave us for the occasion.

Not long after we got another dog. Isabel (Izzy) is an adorable chocolate labradoodle who filled the void in our home quite easily. Izzy is a people dog while she loves to play with other dogs, she needs to make every human she meets fall in love with her too. Often I would find my daughter curled up next to Izzy when she needed some emotional comforting. Or I would give my son the time he needed to de-stress by making him take the dog for a walk around the block.

Now I am not saying that my father keeps coming back to me in the form of a dog. However, every time I am on the receiving end of my dogs' unconditional love, or am comforted by letting my dog sleep on the bed, I think about my father and his wish. Maybe I am honouring him by spoiling the four-legged "children" I bring into my home, or maybe I choose a dog to remind me of all the wonderful feelings a good parent should evoke in their child. Either way, it makes me happy to remember my father's love in this way.

And I'm not alone. All of my siblings have dogs too. ■

Elyse Tytel is a Toronto-based freelance writer.

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Michael Hummel
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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
JANUARY 30, 2020

Where science meets science fiction

Israeli-designed medical technology is increasingly finding a home in the Canadian health system

PAUL LUNGEN
plungen@thecjn.ca

Back in 2006, Capt. Trevor Greene was serving with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry in Afghanistan when he suffered a nearly fatal blow.

A 16-year-old Afghan, whom he later came to know as Abdul, plunged an axe into the back of his head at a meeting with local tribal elders.

He was transported to an American medical hospital in Germany where life-saving surgery was performed. However, the attack left him unable to walk – until a B.C.-based neurosurgeon, Ryan D'Arcy, connected him with an Israeli-made wearable exoskeleton that does the walking for him.

D'Arcy hooked him up with ReWalk, a futuristic contraption at the frontier where science and science fiction meet.

ReWalk was designed and developed by Dr. Amit Goffer, an alumnus of the Technion University in Israel who became a quadriplegic after an accident in 1997.

As the company describes it, "ReWalk Robotics is an innovative medical device company that designs, develops and commercializes powered solutions which provide gait training and mobility for individuals with lower limb disabilities."

Greene's use of the ReWalk apparatus may well be one of the first of several Israeli-designed medical devices that will become employed in British Columbia, said Rowena Rizzotti, vice-president of Healthcare & Innovation for the Health and Technology District in Surrey, B.C.

"ReWalk was used by Capt. Greene as a very important part of his therapy and the first time for use with a client with traumatic brain injury, which continues to be used here in clinical research," particularly in areas where motor function and brain functions are involved, she said.

ReWalk was introduced to Canadians and supporters of the Technion at a demonstration in Toronto in 2014. At the time, retired U.S. Army Sgt. Terry Hannigan Vereline wore the device before a crowd of Technion supporters, physicians and representatives of rehab hospitals. She's still wearing the contraption, becoming the first paralyzed American to successfully complete a marathon – the 2019 New York City Marathon, though it took her three days.

Israel is known for its large number of innovative companies, including in the area of medical technology. Several Israeli innovations are in use in Canada, helping people walk, cope with loneliness and aiding physicians diagnose ailments that improve Canadians' well-being.

Capt. Trevor Greene using the ReWalk, assisted by his wife, Debbie, and Jay Courant, training director at ReWalk Robotics.

In British Columbia, the results of Greene's use of ReWalk have been encouraging across the brain injury community. Where once it was thought that patients make little progress beyond six months after their injury, "Greene has continuously demonstrated that is not the case." He continues to show improvements years later, Rizzotti said.

ReWalk may be only the first of several Israeli-designed medical innovations to be used in British Columbia's south mainland. There is an ongoing relationship between Israel and British Columbia in which both sides exchange research and communicate best practices. What's more, a medical mission to Israel is scheduled for May, Rizzotti said.

The formal relationship arises out of a 2017 memorandum of understanding between the Surrey Health and Tech District with the Centre for Digital Innovation (CDI) in Beersheva, Israel. That built on pre-existing "longstanding scientific collaboration" between the two countries, she said.

For participants in British Columbia, the reason for the relationship is clear: "We recognize that strong innovation and technology is emerging out of Israel, some of it out of the CDI," Rizzotti said.

In addition, Surrey has an ongoing relationship with Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (BGU) as well as Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

"Our focus is to work with Israel's innovation authority to identify areas of research and collaboration," Rizzotti said.

When Canadians attend the medical mission in May, "We will be looking at emerging technology. We recognize that Israel is well advanced around health-related technology. That is where we look for the greatest emerging science and technology."

Even beyond that, Rizzotti continued, Canadians can learn how Israelis commercialize their technology and get it in use where it can help people, sooner rather than later.

David Berson, executive director of British Columbia and the Alberta region of Canadian Associates of BGU, points to a second Israeli medical innovation being tested in B.C.

Nanoscale Artificial Nose (NA-NOSE) promises to give medical practitioners an early non-invasive means to determine whether there are chemicals in a person's breath that are markers of cancer.

NA-NOSE was developed by Technion Prof. Hossam Haick, a Palestinian-Israeli and alumnus of BGU. In 2016, Breathtec BioMedical, Inc. a company traded on the Canadian Securities Exchange and which is now known as Algernon Pharmaceuticals, announced it had acquired non-exclusive licenses to the NA-NOSE technology patents to enable commercial development of the technology.

Technion Research and Development Foundation Ltd., an Israeli private company and wholly-owned subsidiary of the Technion, owns shares in Algernon.

Berson said "they've been trying to attract people to do clinical trials," and found a partner at the Health and Tech District located across the street from Surrey Memorial Hospital.

The connections between the City of Surrey and Israeli tech go back at least to a 2013 trade mission led by then mayor of Surrey, Dianne Watts, which spent a day at BGU, "looking at cyber security, artificial intelligence, health care and other areas in the health sciences," Berson said.

"CIJA Pacific Region (the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs) put together the trade mission," he added.

It's not just medical technologies and devices that brings the two countries together. There's an academic, research and scientific nexus as well.

In Toronto, Mount Sinai Hospital, in partnership with the Azrieli Fellows Program, has created a two-year fellowship program for Israeli physicians that focuses on knowledge sharing and providing specialized training in Toronto for disciplines that are under-served in Israel, including psychiatry, emergency medicine and neurology.

Beyond that, the flow of doctors and researchers between the two countries remains substantial.

Yuval Shachar, a BGU professor, has lectured in B.C.'s lower mainland about the use of artificial intelligence to extract information from data sets.

Alon Friedman, the past head of BGU's neuroscience department, is currently at Dalhousie University in Halifax, studying brain trauma.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23

In Memoriam: Marvelle Koffler

The Koffler Centre of the Arts is deeply saddened by the passing of our co-founder Marvelle Koffler. Marvelle was instrumental to the development and growth of the Koffler, which she founded in 1977 along with her husband Murray Koffler z"l. Throughout her life, Marvelle was a passionate supporter of the arts and a steadfast advocate for women's health and humanitarian causes. She was also a woman of extraordinary strength, kindness and grace who touched many people's lives with her generous spirit and joie de vivre.

Marvelle's vision and commitment were not only instrumental to the success of the Koffler Centre of the Arts, but also to the flourishing of arts and culture in Canada. She was the first chair of the cultural committee of the YM-YWHA, and it was through her founding vision that the Koffler was created. She also served as a board member of multiple arts organizations, including the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and the Toronto Arts Council. Together with Murray, she established the Toronto Outdoor Art Fair as a leading Canadian platform for contemporary visual artists to exhibit and sell their work.

Marvelle's commitment to leading-edge women's healthcare ushered the establishment of the Marvelle Koffler Breast Centre in 1995 and the creation of the International Committee of Women for Science at the Weizmann Institute in Israel. Along with her beloved husband Murray, Marvelle believed in building civic life through the betterment of arts, education and science.

Marvelle's humanity and spirit will always remain at the heart and soul of the Koffler Centre of the Arts. She will be greatly missed by our organization and all who knew her.

koffler

Koffler Centre of the Arts | 180 Shaw St. Toronto | 647.925.0643 | info@kofflerarts.org | kofflerarts.org

Judaism is much more than food

Rabbi Asher Vale

I was recently at Baycrest for pastoral care purposes. That's a fancy way of saying I was visiting with people who are sick or elderly. The elevator taking me back down to the lobby stopped at one of the floors. The doors opened and an older woman entered. She was conversing in a foreign tongue to an ancient-looking woman she had obviously been visiting. Feeling inquisitive, I asked her what language she was speaking. "Italian," she replied.

The woman looked up at me and, in a heavy accented voice, inquired, "and, you?" I told her that I speak English. That was clearly not the response she was looking for. The woman followed up by asking, "you Jewish?" She was either very astute or noticed the big kippah on my head. I nodded in the affirmative.

My new acquaintance then declared in her best broken-English, "Jews, Italians; same – family, food." I smiled politely. The elevator reached the lobby, the doors opened and we both went our separate ways.

There is definitely some truth to my elevator mate's observation. Food and family definitely feature prominently in Jewish life. A Shabbat or holiday meal often includes relatives and can be a veritable banquet. Like me, you may have smiled inwardly when a non-Jewish acquaintance grumbles about all the time, energy and expense involved in preparing Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner. We Jews have that experience every week. Also, what's shul without a kiddush? And, let's not even begin to talk about the lavish feasts associated with weddings, bar and bat mitzvahs and other simchas.

But there has to be more to one's Judaism than kishka and babaganoush. A Jewish life that's based solely upon a single feature, like food or family, is not sustainable. The non-Jewish partner of a secular Jewish guy proudly told me that her potential future mother-in-law is teaching her how to "cook Jewish." That this is the total extent of her initiation into our religion is unfortunate. We haven't survived as a people for 3,500 years just because we share recipes.

> *There has to be more to one's Judaism than kishka and babaaanoush.*

Ideally what makes a food Jewish is consuming it as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. Like the saying goes, we should eat to live and not vice versa. Food can be elevated when we have it on Shabbat, a Jewish holiday or a simcha. If we really want to get deep, we can turn to Kabbalah where it is says that when we eat something we release the holy sparks that are contained within it. And, it's not referring to heartburn.

I would like to share something I learned from one of my teachers. This rabbi was asked about the Torah's view on cannabis use. This was decades before it was legalized in Canada. Setting aside health and legal issues, he gave a very interesting answer. He explained that ancient Jewish scholars elevated alcohol by associating it with many rituals – *Kiddush, Havdalah*, brit milahs, weddings, etc. The rabbi then pointed out that since there is no such religious context for marijuana, the likelihood for abuse is too great. It's one thing to elevate your mind; it's another thing to twist it for no good purpose.

Eating can be looked at the same way. It should definitely be an enjoyable experience. But, a "Jewish" food shouldn't be the beginning and end of our *Yiddishkeit*. Rather it should be seen as something that sustains us physically and enhances us spiritually. ■

A think-tank devoted to the survival of world Jewry

Mordechai Ben-Dat

The Jewish People Policy Institute is an independent, non-profit, professional policy planning think-tank based in Jerusalem. The mission of the institute sets it apart from every other organization devoted to policy innovation. Its purpose "is to ensure the thriving of the Jewish people and the Jewish civilization." Its sweep is global, devising and recommending action-oriented, future-looking, "thinking and planning on issues of primary concern to world Jewry."

The institute is known for its innovative approach to policy planning combining broad width of scope with precise, pragmatic prescriptive steps. The board of directors is co-chaired by ambassadors Stuart Eizenstat and Dennis Ross. Avinoam Bar-Yosef, is the institute's president and founding director. The renowned thinker and policy advisor Prof. Yehezkel Dror, was the institute's founding president.

JPPI has published a myriad of policy papers, special reports, opinion articles and alert papers over the years. One of its highlight documents is its *Annual Assessment of the Situation and the Dynamics of the Jewish People*.

Space does not permit more than the lightest skipping of a stone across the surface of the most recent annual assessment (2019). Interested readers are urged to review the document and any of the other thought-provoking essays on the institute's website. There are many issues and subjects to explore.

The assessment provides an authoritatively anchored snapshot of the world's Jewish demography.

"At the beginning of 2019, the world Jewish population numbered 14.7 million, representing a 100,000 increase over the previous year. Since 2015, the world Jewish population has grown consistently by about a 100,000 per year … Researchers and community leaders are divided over whether part-Jews and Law-of-Return Israelis (who have no non-Jewish religious affiliation) should be counted as part of the Jewish population; if they are counted as Jews, then world Jewish population numbers slightly over 16 million.

"A little more than half of the world's Jews live in the Diaspora (54.7 per cent), rather than in Israel (45.3 per cent). We estimate that, within a decade, the Jewish population of Israel and that of the Diaspora will be equal. Israelis living abroad (600,000) are counted as part of the Diaspora-Jewish population."

The assessment devotes a great deal of study to the increase last year in the anti-Semitism felt around the world. The authors have provided an expanded version of the yearly Integrated Anti-Semitism Index. Not surprisingly, they conclude "the sheer number of anti-Semitic incidents has risen around the world, including in the United States."

Although Jews comprise less than two per cent of the American population, we are the religion-based group most targeted by hate crimes. "Most of the more violent anti-Semitic attacks in the U.S. seem unrelated to Israeli policies, although on college campuses the insidious, if non-violent, BDS movement feeds on overblown portrayals of Israeli policies."

One of the sobering pieces of information provided by the authors of the report is that "nearly three-quarters of American Jews polled felt less secure than they did two years ago."

The assessment acknowledges the impressive results of President Donald Trump's friendship to Israel. But it also points to the dilemma created for Diaspora-Israel relations when the Israeli government draws closer to authoritarian leaders such as Trump. "The long-term interest of Israel demands strong relations with the entire American political spectrum."

It must be forcefully pointed out that this latter statement applies with equal validity for Israel's relations with all true democracies around the world. The Jewish state must maintain healthy ties with the entire political spectrum in those countries.

As important as the engrossing substance of the institute's many publications are, the institute's approach to problem solving is its true signature, namely, always taking into account the best interest of the collective peoplehood rather than the narrower interest of single constituent groups. ■

Preserving a lost grave through social media

Norma Baumel Joseph

In this era of instant global communication, some people are justifiably worried about social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, with their power to invade and violate our privacy.

Yet, as we all know, this global vehicle of instant contact can illuminate, educate and support all sorts of endeavours.

Recently, Sass Peress experienced a "miracle." He wanted to locate and preserve his paternal grandfather's grave in Iraq. But, how could he? There was no way he or any member of his family could go back there. That world of their existence was closed, trampled upon and inaccessible. Or so he thought.

Then, from a chance Facebook encounter, his efforts moved a vast anonymous community of Jews and Iraqi Muslims to preserve 4,000 Jewish graves. And the project is growing.

This is a 21st century miracle.

In November 2017, an Iraqi-born Muslim British friend posted the picture of Miss Israel and Miss Iraq online. Peress, being the friendly communicator that he is, wrote "*salam aleikum.*" Within minutes he was contacted by the manager of the Miss Iraq pageant who asked for a favour locating someone. Peress agreed and then asked for one in return. This led to the relocated Jewish cemetery.

To find and clean up the specific tombstone would require many different individuals. And some money. Trust was built and many exchanges took place leading to the location of Peress' paternal grandfather's tombstone in the transferred Baghdad cemetery.

The original cemetery which was established in 1642, was bulldozed by orders from Gen. Abd Al-Karim Qassam following the 14th July Revolution of 1958, and the graves were irreverently moved to Sadr City, a suburb just outside of Baghdad.

Delicate negotiations were required to clean up the one grave and restore the tombstone. Time, patience and a little money eased the path. Pictures crossed the Internet. Many pictures. Now Peress, his father and family could rest assured that their grandfather's grave is clean and preserved. Even protected. But what about the other graves?

There is a commission to protect and preserve the Jewish cemeteries and mass graves of Europe. It is active and seeks legal recourse, especially for those affected by the Holocaust.

Shouldn't we extend this scrutiny to all our dead and buried? With guidance from elders such as Sami Sourani, Peress understood this and undertook the preservation of the graves of his community of Babylonian Jews. This community had been in the land for over 2,500 years. They had flourished and lived rich cultured lives. Their troubles began in the 20th century peaking in a *farhud* (pogrom) in 1941 and culminating with an increasing list of restrictive laws and regulations.

In 1950 the majority of the community was briefly allowed to leave for Israel. Later others escaped over the mountains with Kurdish help. Eventually, excluded and ejected, only 10 were left. But their dead remained.

Now with the facility of global communication, and some good people on both sides of the ocean, the relocated cemetery could be protected. The dead could lie in peace.

More could be done. With the help of colleagues in the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue of Montreal and the Community of Babylonian Iraqi Jews, the list of participating synagogues and even churches eventually grew from 18 in 2018 to 47 in 2019. The goal now is 300. From London, New York, Los Angeles and even Mexico, people and communities helped with money and events, dedicating worship days (a Shabbat at the end of November) to commemorate, preserve and honour.

Peress has not stopped. He decided to continue after the 4,000 graves at Sadr City were preserved and Shabbatot were set aside for memorials. The quest is now to preserve the cemeteries of other minorities in the Middle East. All those that have been desecrated and demeaned.

This is *hesed shel emet*, the truest type of loving kindness our tradition knows. That which we do for the dead, for those who can never repay us, that is most sincere form of righteousness, of virtue. ■

To participate contact Sass Peress at sass@peress.me

Register to vote in the World Zionist Congress elections

David Roytenberg

The year 2020 is an election year. I'm not writing about the American election, but about an election that should be of interest to Jews all over the world. In the coming months, elections will be held for the 38th World Zionist Congress (WZC). The Congress will meet in Jerusalem in November, bringing together representatives of Jewish communities in Israel, the United States, Canada and many other countries.

As many readers will know, the first Zionist Congress was held in Basel, Switzerland, in 1897 under the chairmanship of Theodor Herzl. It met yearly between 1897 and 1901 and then every other year from 1903 to 1913 and from 1921 to 1939. In 1933, David Ben Gurion campaigned tirelessly in Poland, Lithuania, Czechoslovakia and Austria for the 18th Congress, and established a dominant position for Labor Zionism that was to last for the next 44 years.

After a hiatus during the Second World War, the WZC reconvened in 1946 in the aftermath of the Holocaust and played a critical role in the events leading to the creation of the State of Israel.

In 1951, the 23rd Zionist Congress enacted the Jerusalem Program, which holds that the State of Israel is the central unifying cause of the Jewish people.

With the State of Israel now approaching its 72nd anniversary of independence, what is the role of the Zionist Congress in today's world?

The World Zionist Congress is the governing body of both the World Zionist Organization (WZO) and the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI). Because the majority of the members of the WZC are elected to represent Jews outside of Israel, the congress provides an avenue for Jews in Canada and elsewhere to have a voice in shaping Israeli society.

The WZO mission statement says "the WZO strives to enhance the impact of Zionist ideology and activity in Jewish communities around the world, including Israel, both by working through *shlichim* of the Zionist Federations and their constituent bodies, and by influencing the agenda of the organized Jewish community, particularly through its involvement with the Jewish Agency for Israel."

Thus, the membership of the congress shapes the message that the WZO communicates back to the Jewish communities of the Diaspora as well as the way Zionism is understood in Israel itself.

JAFI was founded in 1929 in response to the establishment by the League of Nations of the British Mandate for Palestine, which called for the creation of a Jewish national home in the Land of Israel. The Jewish Agency was the institution envisioned by the Mandate that would be responsible for creating the Jewish national home.

Today, JAFI continues to play an important role in the ongoing process of building the State of Israel into a place that is welcoming to all Jews. Their mission statement says they aim to create a new generation of strong leaders, build a thriving economy in Israel and provide meaningful opportunities for the global Jewish family to connect and engage.

In pursuit of this mission, JAFI runs social agencies for the elderly and the disabled. It provides affordable housing for the elderly, including Holocaust survivors, as well as for new immigrants and single-parent families. It provides support for at-risk youths, and operates museums, think-tanks, programs which promote aliyah and support olim, religious conversion classes and many other services.

You can learn much more about the WZO and JAFI by visiting their websites. By registering as a member of a recognized Canadian Zionist organization by the end of February, 2020, any Canadian Jew over the age of 18 can vote for the World Zionist Congress, which in turn gives you a voice in the direction of the WZO and the Jewish Agency.

Don't miss out on your chance to be heard. Join today. ■

Do you disagree with our columnists? Have your say by writing to **cjninfo@gmail.com.**

News

Governor General attends World Holocaust Forum

JENNIFER TZIVIA MACLEOD
SPECIAL TO THE CJN, JERUSALEM

Canada's Governor General, Julie Payette, joined almost 50 other heads of state from around the world for the Fifth World Holocaust Forum at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem on Thursday, Jan. 23 to mark the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp by Red Army forces.

In a tweet from Israel on Thursday, Payette called the event an opportunity "to remember what unites us all."

Speaking about combating anti-Semitism in Canada, Payette told *The CJN*, "We are very engaged in policies that will diminish racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism. Last year we adopted an anti-racism strategy, with a specific definition of anti-Semitism."

As reported in *The CJN*, a 2019 Anti-Defamation League survey of anti-Semitism worldwide found that Canada was one of the few countries to experience a drop in anti-Semitic attitudes. Yet the same survey revealed that 28 per cent of Canadians said it was "probably true" that "Jews still talk too much about what happened to them in the Holocaust."

For Payette, this underscores the importance of commemorative events. "We do a lot of commemoration with regard to previous conflicts that Canada has been involved with, like the two great wars," she said. "But in terms of the Holocaust, it is absolutely fundamental that we perpetuate the souvenir [memory] of what happened there. That we continue to do research and putting memorials everywhere so that we teach the next generation.

"We're at a special point now, where the survivors are dwindling, and eventually there will be no more eyewitnesses of this horrible tragedy, and that's why it is important for education purposes and for the absolute importance that this will never happen again."

Israeli president Reuven Rivlin met Gov. Gen. Julie Payette during her visit to Israel for the Fifth World Holocaust Forum. KOBI GIDEON/GPO PHOTO

During Payette's two days in Israel, she also met with President Reuven Rivlin, whom she welcomed to Ottawa in April 2019. That visit was cut short by the illness of his wife, Nechama, who died in June. "He is working really hard. And he is still grieving," Payette said.

"We talked about that really, really strong relation between Canada and Israel that extends not only to trade and culture, but just in deep rooted values."

Canada's ambassador to Israel, Deborah Lyons, who was also present for that meeting, added that Rivlin "really emphasized the friendship between the two countries. He spoke at great length and very eloquently about Canada and Israel as friends, and as trusted friends, of one another. Every time he speaks about Canada it brings tears to my eyes, because he, I think, really does express how valuable the relationship is for both of us."

Payette also took time – despite cold, wet weather – to visit Jerusalem's Old City, including the Western Wall, and meet with the presidents of Armenia and Georgia.

Her travels continued on Jan. 27 with a trip to Auschwitz for International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Rivlin's meeting with Payette was one of 40 held over two days, including with French President Emmanuel Macron, Britain's Prince Charles, and Dutch King Willem-Alexander.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hosted a similarly packed slate. While most of Netanyahu's meetings took place in his office or the King David Hotel, he paid a special call on U.S. Vice-President Mike Pence at the newly-inaugurated U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem.

Several leaders, including Macron, also met with MK Benny Gantz, considered a front runner in Israel's upcoming third election round, to be held March 2.

Notably absent at the Forum was Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who was in Israel but opted out of the ceremony following reports that Yad Vashem had allocated only 30 out of 800 seats for Holocaust survivors. "Our delegation gave them our seats," tweeted Zelensky, who is Jewish. "These people deserve these honors most of all."

A statement by Yad Vashem called this move "odd," given that they had already corrected course and made room for survivors. Some speculate that Zelensky's true motive was dodging the ire of Ukrainians who view Second World War-era Nazi collaborators as nationalist heroes.

Meanwhile, many Israelis were eagerly awaiting Russian President Vladimir Putin amid rumours that he would pardon 26-year-old American-Israeli tourist Naama Issachar, currently serving over seven years in Russia for cannabis possession. Putin reassured Issachar's family that "everything will be fine," while making no concrete promises.

Commentators were also quick to point out the irony that several of the world leaders, including Prince Charles, Putin, and Macron, had divided their time in the region between the Holocaust Forum and a trip to Ramallah to meet with Holocaust denier and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. ■

Weizmann Canada deeply mourns the passing of

Marvelle Koffler, O.Ont., z"l

Founder of the Weizmann Women for Science Program, and Life Member of the International Board.

She was a visionary woman, a dear and beloved friend, and a dedicated supporter.

We extend our condolences to Leon and Rachelli, Theo, Tom and Anna, Adam and Lisa, Tiana and Marc, and the entire family.

WEIZMANN CANADA

"You may not see the impact you're making on one's life, but you are, and it means a lot."

– Barbara Berryman, Ve'ahavta Program Participant

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Montreal vet honoured by national assembly

CJN STAFF, MONTREAL

Second World War veteran George Nashen, 96, will receive a special national assembly medal from David Birnbaum, the MNA for the riding of D'Arcy-McGee, at a ceremony in June.

Nashen will be honoured in the name of all of the men and women who served the cause of freedom in that conflict. Nashen, who lives in Côte-St-Luc, Que., is one of the few surviving Jewish-Canadian war veterans.

In announcing the move, Birnbaum explained that he wanted recognize the contribution of our Second World War veterans while it was still possible. "It struck me at our last Remembrance Day ceremonies in the riding how sadly close we are to a time when no first-hand witnesses to the Second World War will be with us to remember, or to be honoured for their sacrifice, courage and legacy in saving our fundamental freedoms here in Quebec, in all of Canada and around the world," he said.

"Furthermore, this riding that I serve is home to one of the highest number of Holocaust survivors and their families in Canada. The obligation of remembrance is deeply felt here and this medal is one further way of expressing that obligation."

Second World War veteran George Nashen, right, poses for a picture with D'Arcy-McGee MNA David Birnbaum. George Nashen in 1944.

Nashen is a long-time community volunteer and former clothing manufacturer who held the rank of sergeant in the Royal Canadian Air Force. During the war, Nashen lost a number of dear friends and has always made it his duty to share his experience, particularly with young people.

"I was 19 when I enlisted," said Nashen, a Baron Byng High School graduate, "and I wasn't that worldly. I didn't understand much about politics. By 1938, with the rise of Hitler, the terrible threat to the free world started to become clear. I thought, I have to go over....

"It's important for young people to learn about the atrocities and the sacrifices of the Second World War. Do they really know the seriousness of war, the feeling of daily life, when you get issued a helmet and a gas mask to make sure you survive the day?"

In 1943, Nashen was stationed in London. "I went over on the Queen Mary," he recalled. "We were 26,000 enlisted men and women; the ship normally carried only 2,000.

"It was a humbling and scary few years. I remember the rumbling of incoming and outgoing bombers overhead, every night in London. The stakes were enormous, and the freedoms we take for granted today were in peril back then. That should never be forgotten."

Nashen expressed his appreciation for the medal, but stressed that he would only accept the honour in the name of all the veterans.

Each spring, Birnbaum bestows three D'Arcy-McGee national assembly citizenship medals upon individuals chosen for their community contributions by a three-member jury. Nashen will formally receive his medal at that ceremony, which will be held on June 1. The names of all the medal winners become part of the permanent national assembly record and are noted in perpetuity on its official website. ■

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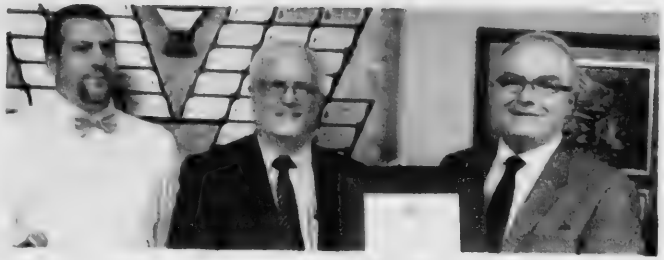
B.C. city marks Holocaust Remembrance Day

LAUREN KRAMER
VANCOUVER CORRESPONDENT

January 27 was proclaimed Holocaust Remembrance Day in the City of Richmond, B.C. The proclamation was declared by Richmond Mayor Malcolm Brodie at a packed ceremony held at the Bayit, one of the city's Orthodox synagogues.

Mike Sachs, the past president of the Bayit, has fostered an enduring relationship with the mayor on behalf of Richmond's Jewish community and initiated the conversation about having the city recognize Holocaust Remembrance Day some months back. "Mayor Brodie and I meet periodically throughout the year and he's very supportive of our community and other communities in Richmond," Sachs said. "But the catalyst for this proclamation was the pending auction of Nazi memorabilia at a local auction house in November. That brought everything to a head."

The auction house, Maynards Fine Art & Antiques, was planning to auction Nazi memorabilia, including a flag with a swastika, Nazi pins and a German Luftwaffe officer's dagger. The items were withdrawn from the auction after community members, city council members, local MLAs and the Jewish community expressed their outrage.



Mike Sachs, Richmond Mayor Malcolm Brodie and Bayit president Keith Liedtke welcome the City of Richmond's decision to mark Jan. 27 as Holocaust Remembrance Day.

"After that, the mayor told me, we need to make a stand, and we started working on the proclamation," Sachs said. "Essentially it's a statement that Richmond supports the Jewish community and believes in Holocaust education."

Judy Darcy, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions in B.C., addressed the audience with the story of her father, a Russian Jew who survived the Holocaust by pretending to be a devout Catholic, but lost the rest of his family. "He hid his Jewish identity from everyone, including his children, until a few years before his death at 93, living with the trauma of loss, guilt and surviving all his life," she reflected. "It's so important to share our stories in the world so we never forget – especially in a world where bigotry and hatred is on the rise."

Before reading the proclamation Brodie declared it was a "night of solemn reflections in our city. There are many reasons that we should recognize Holocaust Remembrance Day.

"We have to honour those who suffered and died and make sure there's never any repetition of those events. We have to recognize that another Holocaust is not some vague remote possibility, and be mindful that acts of hatred and anti-Semitism are real and can grow. And as a community we have to take every possible step to decry anti-Semitism and ensure our community is characterized by compassion. We need to teach young people about the Holocaust, and to repeat this event every year and bring more attention to it each time."

Ezra Shankin, CEO of the Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver, said the proclamation was a "shield against hate" in a time when symbols and acts of anti-Semitism are increasing. "Swastikas are popping up too much on school walls, Jewish summer camps and public spaces, and city councils are beginning to understand that to create loving, tolerant, caring communities, we must remember when things weren't this way," he said.

Nico Slobinsky, director of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs Pacific Region, said Richmond will be joined by the City of Vancouver and the City of North Vancouver, who will be announcing similar proclamations this month. ■

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SHALOM HARTMAN INSTITUTE מכון שלום הרטמן

Hillel says, *"That which is hateful unto you do not do unto others: this is the whole Torah and the rest is commentary. Now go and study!"*

(Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shabbat, 31a)

The Shalom Hartman Institute mourns the passing of our friend, board member, and longtime hevruta

Dr. Douglas Wilansky z"l

Doug stood alongside our founder Rabbi David Hartman z"l as a friend and student since their time together in Montreal, and was a stalwart supporter and partner since the founding of the Institute in its mission to serve the Jewish people. Doug manifested a deep appreciation for the study of Torah and its fulfillment in how he lived as a Jew, a physician, and as a human being. He was a brilliant mind and an inspiring mensch who was loved and revered by everyone on our Board and staff.

May his memory be a blessing, as was his life.

Rabbi Dr. Donniel Hartman, President
Shalom Hartman Institute

Dr. Yehuda Kurtzer, President
Shalom Hartman Institute of North America

Robert P. Kogod, Chair
Shalom Hartman Institute

Elizabeth Wolfe, Chair
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Lawsuit against B'nai Brith to go ahead

RON CSILLAG
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Michael Mostyn

A defamation lawsuit brought against B'nai Brith Canada by the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) may proceed, an Ontario court has ruled.

B'nai Brith had sought to dismiss the action as a "strategic lawsuit against public participation," or SLAPP, under Ontario's anti-SLAPP law.

The advocacy group had claimed that CUPW's action was "an illegitimate attempt to suppress freedom of expression on a matter of public interest," and that it should be stayed or dismissed, the court said.

While the case "has some elements of SLAPP litigation," it does not appear to be the type of action the legislature contemplated should be stopped "at this preliminary stage," Justice Calum MacLeod of the Ontario's Superior Court of Justice stated in his Jan. 16 ruling that dismissed B'nai Brith's motion.

The evidence "does not persuade me that the principal objective of CUPW is to stifle criticism," MacLeod wrote, adding that, in fact, CUPW's defamation suit "appears to have merit."

The case dates to late July 2018, when B'nai Brith posted a press release on its website stating that the 50,000-member CUPW had aligned with its Palestinian counterpart, the Palestinian Postal Service Workers Union (PPSWU), which "supports terrorism and the elimination of Israel."

B'nai Brith stated that the PPSWU, on its Facebook page, glorified a Palestinian terrorist who had murdered an Israeli rabbi and was then killed by Israeli troops; and had called for the release from prison of another Palestinian who was convicted of attempting to smuggle weapons into the Gaza Strip.

"Rather than using the union movement to build peace between Israel and the Palestinians, the CUPW leadership has aligned itself with the path of violence and extremism," Michael Mostyn, CEO of B'nai Brith Canada, said at the time. "This is both deeply immoral and obviously not in the best interests of Canadian postal workers."

Two days later, B'nai Brith posted another press release saying that CUPW's "radical" leadership had "refused to respond to our questions on why it would partner with a terror-supporting organization – and that's unacceptable."

B'nai Brith also raised the issue of whether Jewish and Israeli CUPW members can be compelled to pay union dues, "which may be used to support a foreign organization that wants to see them murdered."

CUPW, which has a lengthy history of anti-Israel activism, sued for defamation, alleging that B'nai Brith issued its press releases "with reckless disregard for the truth," had acted maliciously, and implied the union supports terrorism and is anti-Semitic.

The union's support for "a peaceful two state solution to the Middle East conflict is well publicized and is available on its website. So too is CUPW's opposition to terrorism, violence and anti-Semitism in all forms," the judge wrote.

MacLeod stressed that he was not accusing B'nai Brith of malice or impugning the organization. But evidence suggests that it "acted on assumptions without exercising due diligence. The only research into PPSWU was a cursory internet search and review of Facebook pages."

The episode was triggered by B'nai Brith's "deep disagreement" with CUPW's support for the anti-Israel boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement, "but rather than attacking that directly without defaming the union, the defendants chose to focus on the relatively minor involvement with the PPSWU and to blow that out of proportion," MacLeod wrote.

Like a corporation, a union may be defamed, "although, of course, it cannot suffer hurt feelings."

B'nai Brith said it still believes the CUPW action was a SLAPP suit and it "will be discussing our next steps with our legal counsel," Mostyn in a statement to *The CJN*.

In a related case, the Supreme Court of Canada has yet to hear B'nai Brith's leave to appeal a ruling by the Ontario Court of Appeal.

The provincial high court found last summer that lawyer Dimitri Lascaris could proceed with a defamation lawsuit against B'nai Brith, overturning a lower court's ruling that dismissed the action under Ontario's anti-SLAPP legislation.

Lascaris, who has shown support for a variety of pro-Palestinian causes and activists, launched the libel suit after B'nai Brith published an August 2016 article that accused him of advocating "on behalf of terrorists who have murdered Israeli citizens." ■

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How Canada's Diaspora can influence Israel

RON CSILLAG
rcsillag@thecjn.ca

Rabbi Jennifer Gorman

It's a fair bet that most Canadian Jews have never heard of the World Zionist Congress (WZC).

Founded over a century ago by Theodor Herzl himself, the WZC is "actually really important," as *The Forward* recently put it.

Meeting only once every five years, it's been called the supreme ideological and policy-making body of the Zionist movement. Delegates allocate nearly $1 billion annually to support Israel and world Jewry through some of their most august institutions: The World Zionist Organization, the Jewish National Fund, and the Jewish Agency for Israel.

Despite its low profile, it makes big decisions about the policies and leadership of those organizations – and has money. The congress "represents the entire political and religious spectrum of the Zionist movement" and is "by far the largest and most widespread democratic exercise in the Jewish world today," it says.

The 38th WZC will meet in Jerusalem this Oct. 20-22. Some 525 delegates – with about 38 per cent from Israel, 30 per cent from the United States, and one-third from the rest of the Diaspora – are expected.

The World Zionist Organization (WZO) determines each country's number of delegates based on their Jewish populations. Earlier this month, Canada was allotted 20 delegates, the same as in 2015. It's the third largest delegation in the Diaspora, after the United States and France.

Les Rothschild, president of the Canadian Zionist Federation (CZF), said he will appeal the latest allocation to Canada because the country's Jewish population has changed from five years ago.

In the U.S., elections for delegates from among 15 diverse slates will take place until March 11. In Canada, there hasn't been an election of delegates to the WZC since 2005.

According to Rothschild, elections will happen here this time only if the constituent members of CZF cannot agree on how to divide the 20 allocated delegates.

The Canadian makeup five years ago was:

- Seven delegates for Mizrachi Canada, which is Orthodox and "Torah-driven."
- Six for ARZA Canada, an affiliate of the Union for Reform Judaism and a member of ARZENU, the International Association of Reform Zionists.
- Three for Mercaz Canada, affiliated with Masorti/Conservative Judaism.
- Two for the Canadian Forum of Russian Speaking Jewry.
- One for Ameinu Canada (liberal-progressive).
- One for Meretz Canada, affiliated with the left-wing Israeli political party of the same name.

A different mix will be needed this time thanks to a new CZF member: Herut Canada. Dormant for many years in this country, the right-wing group was revitalized last spring.

To settle the matter, each organization has to submit its membership by March 1. If members can't agree on the Canadian delegation's makeup, "then there will be a decision on whether to hold elections," Rothschild said.

"There has to be 100 per cent agreement. If one party says, 'I want an election,' then we have an election," which would be held online in May or June, Rothschild said. "If everybody's happy, then there's no election."

Only members of CZF affiliates can vote in an election, he said, with outcomes based on who gets the vote out best.

While agreeing that the WZC has low visibility, Rothschild called it "a chance to voice opinion from across the spectrum, from far right to far left and everything in between."

Rabbi Jennifer Gorman, executive director of Mercaz Canada, agreed.

The congress "is the only place where we, as Diaspora Jews, have a say in what goes on in Israel. We have a right and an obligation to vote in Canada," she told *The CJN*. "We also have a right and an obligation to vote in Israel, and this is the place."

A recent mailing across North America from the Ramah Camping Movement, which is affiliated with the Conservative movement, urged Jews to support the Mercaz slate with a view "to help break the ultra-Orthodox's firm grasp on all religious matters, paving the way for the growth of Conservative/Masorti Judaism in Israel."

The Reform slate's strong showing in 2015 allowed it to name board members to the Jewish National Fund, according to *The Forward*. ■

Author says Nazis were less meticulous about female prisoners

ALEX ROSE
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Heather Dune Macadam came to Toronto on Jan. 24 to spend Shabbat with a special friend: Edith Grosman, a 95-year-old Holocaust survivor who is also one of the main subjects of Macadam's new book, *999: The Extraordinary Young Women of the First Official Jewish Transport to Auschwitz*.

Macadam, who is not Jewish, initially learned of the story of the first Jewish transport to Auschwitz, filled with young women from Slovakia, when she wrote *Rena's Promise*, a memoir about Rena Kornreich Gelissen, another woman on that original transport. Through her research, Macadam learned that 297 of the almost 1,000 young women on the transport were teenagers, and she wanted to write their story.

"I had never actually spoken to one," Macadam said. "When I discovered Edith, and met with her, I was recaptivated by the story and really wanted to tell it from a teenage perspective. And I wanted to tell it from a multiple narrative perspective."

So Macadam got to work on the book. One of the first things she had to figure out was the actual number of women on the transport. There were conflicting reports of both 999 and 997. After careful research into the original documents, she found that while the original list said there were 999 people, due to a few errors, the actual number was, in fact, 997.

The confusion about the correct number of passengers matches a theme Macadam discovered over the course of her research: the Nazis were often much less meticulous in their recordkeeping for women than for men.

Macadam also found that the Slovakian areas the women on the transport were from were literally paying to get rid of them, and stopped handing them over to the Nazis only when it was becoming too expensive. Macadam said the sheer brutality of the exchange was tough to wrap her mind around. At first, she likened it to slavery, but realized that wasn't quite right.

"A friend of mine was reading the manuscript and she said, 'They weren't really sold into slavery, were they?' And I said, 'Oh, shoot, I'm using the wrong term.' But of course, there's no term for that," Macadam recalled. "This sounds really horrible, but if you're a slave, you're valued because you've been bought or sold. You've paid money for a human being, but you might actually take care of your property. But this is like, literally, 'Take it. Take this person. I don't care what happens to them.' It's a real mind twist."

Macadam said the reason the Nazis didn't value the women, even as property, is because they wanted to get rid of them. Macadam said the girls on the train were pressed into heavy labour, such as demolishing buildings.

"It's just insane. And it totally speaks to the insanity of the Holocaust. They wanted to destroy these young women. They are deporting them so that they never come back, as one of my witnesses says," Macadam said.

Ironically, though, the women who arrived at Auschwitz first may have actually been some of the most likely to survive, said Rosette Rutman, daughter of Ella Friedman Rutman. Friedman Rutman, 99, is another survivor of that first transport who is living in Toronto and a subject of the book.

Coming to Auschwitz early "probably saved my mother and aunts' lives, because Auschwitz grew so quickly that they had jobs to do. They weren't killed immediately," said Rutman. She also said that, at points, she had to take a break from reading *999* because it was too difficult to imagine her mother going through the awful things she was reading. Even so, Rutman said she is very happy that Macadam documented the stories of the young women.

"These girls were dehumanized and de-womanized. And it speaks to a patriarchal society that demeaned women," said Macadam. "For me, it feels very important, because our society tends to think teenagers don't have a lot of important things to say." ■

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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
JANUARY 30, 2020

Auschwitz visit turns up new information for survivor's son

PAUL LUNGEN
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In the 70 years following his liberation from the Nazis, Esse Goldberg was never reticent to tell his story.

Unlike other survivors, Esse Goldberg did not spare any details about his experiences in Nazi concentration camps, which included Auschwitz-Birkenau and Buchenwald.

Sheldon Goldberg, Esse's son, recalls many of the details told by his late father: the roll calls outside the barracks in Birkenau that could last two or three hours in the middle of a particularly frigid winter; witnessing the cold-blooded shooting of a prisoner who was not at the barracks at the appointed time; the menial labour he was forced to perform in the camp; and surviving the January 1945 death march from Auschwitz into Germany.

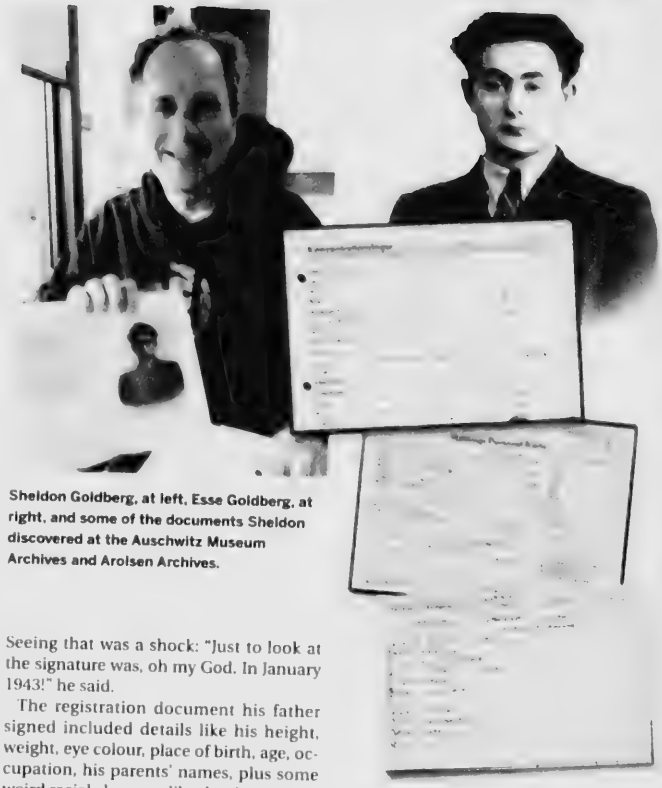
But Goldberg had no idea that his father told the Nazis at Auschwitz that he was an apprentice carpenter, or that he signed a registration document when he arrived at the camp. He learned of these new details after receiving documentation from the Auschwitz Museum Archives and the Arolsen Archives.

Goldberg visited Auschwitz in October 2019, a little more than a year after his father died in the summer of 2018 at age 95. "I wanted to see what my dad went through and see all the places I'd heard about since I was a child," he said.

Following a tour of the camp, he made his way to the Auschwitz Museum Archives and requested whatever information was available about his father.

The museum provided some information on the spot, but he had to wait a few weeks for a full report to be delivered to his home in Toronto.

It turns out that the Nazi SS was meticulous in keeping records. The archives contain a document signed by his father when he arrived at the camp on Jan. 30, 1943.



Sheldon Goldberg, at left, Esse Goldberg, at right, and some of the documents Sheldon discovered at the Auschwitz Museum Archives and Arolsen Archives.

Seeing that was a shock: "Just to look at the signature was, oh my God. In January 1943!" he said.

The registration document his father signed included details like his height, weight, eye colour, place of birth, age, occupation, his parents' names, plus some weird racial elements like the shape of his nose.

What most startled Goldberg was that his father's given name was Israel (sometimes listed as "Iser" or "Izer"). All his life, his father had gone by the name Esse. "Probably Israel was changed to Esse," Goldberg suggested.

As for his stated occupation, that also came as news to Goldberg. "He never told us he wanted to be a carpenter," he said, adding that his father likely chose an occupation he thought would make him valuable to the Nazis.

For Goldberg, the visit to Auschwitz reinforced many of the stories told by his father. The tour guide noted that prisoners who were late for roll call were shot on the spot, just as his father had described.

On arrival, his father was given the number 98893, which was tattooed on his left arm. When they were children, Goldberg's sister, Barbara, would ask her father, "What's that number?"

His father would say it was his phone number, Goldberg recalled.

But that number proved valuable when he made inquiries to the Arolsen Archives, which houses vast quantities of wartime and postwar documents.

It was recorded by officials at Buchenwald when his father, and others with the name Goldberg, arrived from Auschwitz on Jan. 22, 1945. "It's amazing," Goldberg said. "My wife was saying, 'they tried to eliminate the (Jewish) race, yet they kept personal records.' "

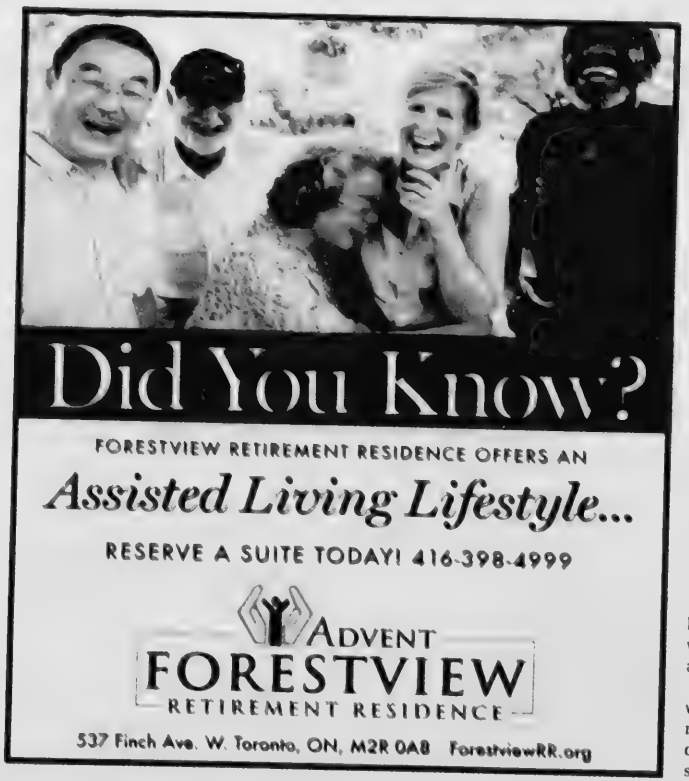
Goldberg shared his findings with family members and news of his findings spread quickly. Many are curious about their own parents' experiences and Goldberg wants them to know the case is not necessarily closed when it comes to learning more about their lives.

The database at Arolsen is fairly well known, but people should know that there is good information to be had from the Auschwitz Museum Archives, as well, he said. "The reason I'm doing this is to educate more people, to get more information about their parents."

Unfortunately, his father is no longer around to explain some of what he's learned. "I think about it constantly, how having that information while he was alive would have been the icing on the cake. To show him his signature, not knowing that his birth name was Israel, (that he was) an apprentice carpenter, all of which were never discussed while he was my father," said Goldberg.

"It's a very weird feeling and gives me goose bumps thinking that this information can never be discussed with him and how I feel that I didn't do this trip earlier in my life." ■

For more information, contact Sheldon Goldberg at goldys@rogers.com.



SPONSORED CONTENT

Ve'ahavta's Cold Night Fund helps people living on Toronto's streets

Younadiam, a Ve'ahavta client, meets up with the Mobile Jewish Response to Homelessness outreach van on a cold winter's night. CONNIE TSANG PHOTO

For Younadiam, a refugee from the Middle East, help came in the form of a brand-new winter coat. Six months ago, Younadiam had to move out of a shared apartment and ended up living alone in a community shelter. That is when he first met up with Ve'ahavta's Mobile Jewish Response to Homelessness outreach van and received the warm clothing.

Over time, Younadiam has become a "regular" of the Ve'ahavta van, developing meaningful relationships with the outreach workers who drive their route through the city.

"They're an amazing organization. They're here every night – and they don't judge me or my choices," says Younadiam.

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness defines homelessness as "the living situation of an individual or family who does not have stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it." People become homeless for a variety of reasons, including migration, losing one's job, inability to afford rent or mortgage, break-up of relationships and eviction for non-financial reasons.

According to the City of Toronto's *Street Needs Assessment* report, close to 9,000 people experienced homelessness in 2018, and the numbers have been growing steadily. Some, like Younadiam, live in a shelter, others couch-surf between friends' homes or stay in other temporary locations. Between 500 and 1,000 individuals "sleep rough" – that is, they sleep outside each night in parks, under the Gardiner Expressway and on grates found on city streets.

For more than 20 years, Ve'ahavta's outreach van has been serving the needs of these individuals experiencing homelessness in Toronto. Today, the van goes out six days a week (there are no shifts on Friday evenings), 52 weeks per year. With the recent donation of the use of a larger van from Discount Car and Truck Rentals, two professional outreach workers and three to four volunteers now go out on each shift.

The van provides healthy and hearty food, along with coffee, water, essential clothing, extreme-weather supplies, hygiene supplies and harm-reduction kits. Yet, the van is so much more than food and supply distribution for individuals experiencing homelessness. The trust that the outreach workers and regular volunteers develop with the van's clients leads to successful referrals, including medical, housing and other forms of support. Sometimes that relationship-building takes years.

Some of the individuals move on to other Ve'ahavta programs that help people build greater stability and prepare for the workforce. Barbara Berryman recalls the blanket she received from the Ve'ahavta van at a time when she was living in a shelter. "I was approached by volunteers and ... they provided me with a nice warm meal and hot drink and a blanket – and that blanket I still have today to remind me of how far I've come," she says.

Berryman attended Ve'ahavta's Skills Academy, Speakers Bureau and the MyToronto photography program. She now shares her personal story as an ambassador for Ve'ahavta. (You can see more about Barbara's story on Ve'ahavta's blog.)

Going out in the van is often a profound experience for the volunteers. Recently, Ayotunde Fatola, an MBA student, became involved with Ve'ahavta while working on a project assessing the economic impact of homelessness in Toronto. He volunteered with the van program one evening last September.

"My shift began at 6 p.m., loading the outreach van with food, clothing and other personal hygiene materials before heading out. The van made eight stops over the five-hour shift in what was, to say at the very least, an eye-opening experience for me. I got the opportunity to understand the value of the organization's efforts for people in the local Toronto community.

"The rapport between the Ve'ahavta staff and those we went to serve really stood out. Ve'ahavta staff had established friendships with some of these people – cracking jokes, sharing insights and checking up on their progress, all to my amazement. It later came to my understanding that because the van goes out six nights a week, the staff are able to build relationships with some of these people. It did not necessarily always feel like we were helping those 'less fortunate.' Instead, at times, it felt as though the staff were going to check up on friends in the community – ensuring their well-being."

Ensuring people's well-being is particularly challenging during the winter months, especially during the extreme cold weather alerts. People who sleep outdoors in the cold face the risk of dehydration, frostbite and/or hypothermia.

Furthermore, there are not always enough shelter spaces for people to go to, and tragically, there have been a growing number of deaths of people experiencing homelessness.

In January 2017, the City of Toronto began tracking and reporting on homeless deaths in this city. By the end of that year, at least 101 citizens of Toronto had died while experiencing homelessness. That is approximately two people per week.

In 2018, Ve'ahavta started the Cold Night Fund in order to strengthen its outreach program. While many generous corporate donors contribute annually, the van receives no city funding. The majority of the funds raised are from individual contributions from people in the city who care about our neighbours who are experiencing homelessness. ■

To help Ve'ahavta as a volunteer or with a gift to the Cold Night Fund, visit veahavta.org today.

Barbara Berryman speaks to groups about her experiences with homelessness.
MICHAEL RAJZMAN PHOTO

Finding the sister of missing Canadian pilot

ELLIN BESSNER
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

"Thank you for writing about my brother. He was my hero and I adored him."

That is how Maxine Black Stromberg replied after an emotional telephone interview with me last week from Florida. I had reached her hours before my *Canadian Jewish News* cover story was published Jan. 23). It describes a decades-long search for her brother, Sgt. Harry Black. We were too late to include it then, but now "Finding Blackie" has an epilogue.

Black Stromberg, now 89, was a child in Toronto when her brother was killed while serving as a pilot with the British Royal Air Force (RAF) overseas during the Second World War.

"That was a real trauma," she said.

He was one of the nearly 450 Canadian Jews killed in that war.

Harry was a Harbord Collegiate graduate. He told friends his application to join the Royal Canadian Air Force was rejected because he was Jewish. His sister said Harry worked in the nickel mines in Sudbury, Ont., to make money, then went to New York City in the spring of 1939. As global tensions mounted, he found a cattle boat bound for England. Harry worked his way across the Atlantic, and joined up.

By July 1941, while ten-year-old Maxine spent her summer at Camp Naivelt, near Brampton, Ont., Harry was at the controls

Sgt. Harry Black

Barnett and Maxine Black at Camp Naivelt

on his last mission to bomb Germany. He was declared "Missing in Action" on July 8. The plane and crew were never found.

"As far as I know, [he was] shot down," Black Stromberg said.

A wartime friend of her brother's from Toronto has some of the answers to Harry's final days.

Decorated veteran Lorne Winer, now 102, spent a memorable leave with Black in Wales, although the date is fuzzy. Winer was with the Royal Canadian Artillery, and joined Black for a week at the home of a Jewish fur manufacturer in Cardiff.

After the trip, Winer sent some of their souvenir photos to Black's base, but they were returned. Winer mailed the prints to Black's family in Toronto. Winer wonders if they were lost to German submarine attacks on Allied shipping.

This week, after seeing a copy of Winer's wartime photos, Black Stromberg is certain the man is her brother.

Her family didn't immediately tell her the news of Harry's death until the 1941 camp session was over, to "protect" her.

"I found out the day I was going home from camp," she said. "I remember my poor father driving me home, hysterical."

Harry Black was the oldest child of Barnett Black, who made and sold women's hats at a store on Adelaide Street. Barnett had been a widower; after Harry's mother had died, Black married again, and Maxine was Harry's much younger half-sister.

Harry had been a star athlete at Harbord, and worked as sports director at Camp Naivelt. After his presumed death, camp friends built a wooden memorial in the form of an airplane wing. They dedicated the statue to "Blackie," his nickname.

Black Stromberg has a photo of herself and her late father posing in front of it. After that, the death of her beloved Harry was not to be a topic for discussion.

"We are a family that didn't talk," Black Stromberg acknowledged. She did name a son after her brother. Harry Victor Sadoff, now 60, works as a screenwriter and producer in Los Angeles.

After their father's death in 1984, Black Stromberg found a trove of papers from Harry's military service, including her father's correspondence with the families of Harry's crew. Now, Black Stromberg has a mission when she returns home from Florida. Like many next-of-kin of Canada's 17,000 Second World War Jewish veterans, she has "a box" at home.

"It might have some stuff," she said, hopefully. She is also looking forward to connecting with her brother's wartime friend, Lorne Winer.

"[Harry] was very personable. Everybody who knew him remembers him." ■

•••

Last week's cover story about Harry Black misidentified the designer of the memorial sculpture at Harbord Collegiate. It was designed by Morton Katz. *The CJN* regrets the error.

Winnipeg looks to Argentina for new immigrants

MYRON LOVE
PRAIRIES CORRESPONDENT, WINNIPEG

Twenty-five years ago, Winnipeg's Jewish community made a series of presentations to Jewish-Argentinians in Buenos Aires that resulted in a wave of new Jewish immigrants to the Canadian city.

In 1995, Janice Filmon, who currently serves as Manitoba's lieutenant-governor and was then the wife of Manitoba Premier Gary Filmon, found herself sitting next to a Jewish-Argentinian on a plane. He was looking to immigrate to Toronto, but she persuaded him to consider Winnipeg instead.

He was impressed by what he saw and suggested that the community send representatives to Buenos Aires to meet with other Argentinian Jews who were considering leaving the country.

At the time, Winnipeg's Jewish population was declining rapidly and economic conditions in Argentina were in a dismal state. The Winnipeg Jewish population had been in decline for more than 30 years and the community was looking to try to reverse the trend. At the same time, the provincial government, in an effort to bolster Manitoba's population, was introducing a new, targeted immigration program outside of the federal one.

Carlos Benesdra and family

The Jewish Federation of Winnipeg also established a website in Spanish promoting the city and organized several missions to Buenos Aires over a span of five years to meet prospective immigrants. "We had 44 families come between 1996 and 2002, 70 come in 2003 and 40 more in 2004," reported Evelyn Hecht in *The CJN* in 2008.

And, she pointed out, the Winnipeg Jewish community provided a welcome reception for Jewish Argentinians who immigrated to the city.

While conditions have improved in Argentina over the last 15 years – with a corresponding drop in Jewish-Argentinian immigration to Winnipeg – the economic and political situation has recently deteriorated, resulting in renewed interest in the prospect of immigrating to Winnipeg.

Carlos Benesdra, a chartered professional accountant, was one of those Jewish Argentinians who came to Winnipeg hoping to build a better life for his family. He came here 17 years ago and is currently the chief financial officer for the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg.

In early December, Benesdra and his family paid a visit to Buenos Aires to see extended family. "We have received a lot of (interest from) Argentina recently on our website," says Elaine Goldstine, the executive director of the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg. "Since Carlos was going to be in Buenos Aires anyway, we thought it might be a good idea for him to do some presentations to prospective immigrants."

Benesdra adds that the Federation placed a small ad in local Jewish newspapers. He reports that 80 people showed up for his two presentations.

"I talked about Jewish life in Winnipeg – the synagogues, the schools," he says.

Goldstine notes that immigration to Manitoba now is a little more difficult than it was 25 years ago. "The provincial government is looking for specific skill sets," she said. "We are working closely on this new initiative with the government and the Argentinian association in Winnipeg.

"We will have to see what happens." ■

A 'hothouse for medical innovation'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Friedman, founder and CEO of Emagix, said the Israeli company employs "diagnostic software, developed at Ben Gurion University, which takes images of the retina captured by conventional medical cameras and quantifies leakage, flow and volume in retinal blood vessels. This provides an accurate and quantitative view of vascular health and integrity of the retina, eliminating the subjective element of a retinal examination."

That software is under development in Canada, he added.

And David Meiri, who now heads the Laboratory of Cancer Biology and Cannabinoid Research at the Technion's faculty of biology in Israel, worked in Toronto from 2009-13 where he conducted post-doctorate research at the Ontario Cancer Institute, which is associated with the Princess Margaret Hospital.

One of the Canadian doctors who has taken an interest in Israeli medical technology is Barry Rubin, chair and CEO of the Mount Sinai Hospital UHN Academic Medical Organization and Medical Director of the Peter Munk Cardiac Centre at UHN in Toronto.

He's also a vascular surgeon who is excited about a medical device he has been testing for about a year.

Developed by RealView Imaging, an Israeli startup, it's a 3D imaging device that generates holographic images that doctors can "touch" and manipulate in real time.

Until now, doctors relied on two-dimensional images created by ultrasound devices or CT scans, he said.

"This is different. This is projecting elements of light called pixels into space. You can actually have depth perception. It's sort of like looking at the real thing. It's amazing, really."

When you put on the device, with its sunglasses-like lens, you look a little like the Terminator, Rubin quipped. But when you do so, the computer in the device takes data from two-dimensional imaging machines and turns them into a three-dimensional holographic image.

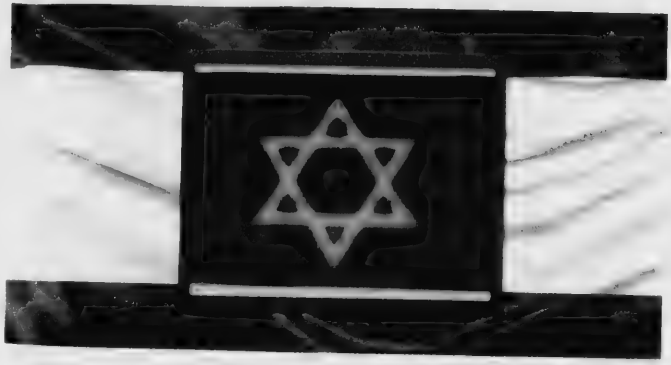
You can look inside the heart and examine the valves, check for clots or trauma.

"We think that by seeing better inside the heart, we have more accurate procedures and have better outcomes," he said.

So far, tests of the device have been encouraging, but it's new technology, so "we're going slowly," Rubin said.

When Rubin first learned of the device from a colleague a few years ago, he couldn't believe what he was hearing.

"I said, what are you talking about?" Intrigued by its potential, he cold-called the company in Israel, and set up a meeting with RealView.



FREEPIK PHOTO

That was about four or five years ago, and in the interim Rubin has visited there three times, while company representatives have come to Toronto as well.

The technology was unveiled at the Peter Munk Cardiac Centre in April 2019 by Israeli President Reuven Rivlin, who was making his first trip to Canada as president.

Sunnybrook Hospital, one of the main trauma facilities in Toronto, is also riding the Israeli tech train using a Non Invasive Cardiac System (NiCas).

"Over the last two years we have been conducting a prospective study on maternal cardiovascular characteristics in complicated and uncomplicated pregnancies using a device (NiCas) developed by a company based in Israel," the hospital said in an email.

"We have been pioneering work in a procedure called focused ultrasound which uses sound waves instead of scalpels to treat issues such as brain cancer, Alzheimer's, ALS and others. The machine we use for this procedure is developed in part by an Israeli company called Insightech."

Igor Granov, the chief operating officer of NI Medical, said NiCas is being used both at Sunnybrook and in hospitals in Alberta.

It provides information to doctors about the heart – how well it is beating, how well it is pumping blood through the body, while monitoring blood pressure.

It can replace more invasive procedures, such as inserting a catheter, which "is not a very pleasant procedure," he said.

With NiCas, patients sit in a chair while disposable sensors are placed on the wrist and ankle.

"It's as simple as that. There is no need to undress," Granov said.

Granov said the connection between doctors at Sunnybrook and Israel helped establish the relationship that led to the import of NiCas to Toronto.

"One of the Israeli doctors came in for a fellowship and told the doctors in Canada about the wonders of the machine," he said.

The device can run from US $12,000 to $24,000 depending on its configuration.

To date, the company has made only minor inroads into Canada. The United States is a much more lucrative market because of its size and the greater number of doctors. What's more Canada imposes greater regulatory burdens, he said.

The Technion is the source of yet another medical marvel in use in Canadian hospitals – a snake-like robot that can be inserted into an orifice and which is guided to an area needing treatment. The "snakehead" contains sensors and a camera that provides a 3D image, while surgical instruments are inserted through the snake. Cardiac cauterization and removal of tumours are among the procedures that the snake can accomplish, all while minimizing trauma and the risk of infection.

Baycrest, one of Canada's leading gerontology institutions, likewise makes use of Israeli medical innovations: ElliQ, a proactive mini robot that relies on artificial intelligence and a device developed by Brainmarc that measures brain engagement when patients perform various tasks.

Baycrest and the Jewish Senior Living Group in San Francisco are currently evaluating ElliQ and its potential impact on alleviating loneliness, social isolation, mood and improving the quality of life.

In addition, Baycrest is evaluating Brainmarc's brain engagement index (BEI), which senses brain waves. The hospital has five units and is ordering two more.

Allison Sekuler, managing director for the Centre for Aging and Brain Health Innovation (CABHI) at Baycrest, said the facility has entered into special arrangements with Israeli firms to test innovative products for Canadian seniors.

Israel is a "hothouse for medical innovations," particularly when it comes to brain health and aging patients. CABHI has partnered with the Israel Innovation Authority to invite Israeli companies to test their technologies in Canada, Sekuler stated.

CABHI will bring innovators, clinicians and scientists to Israel in March to further foster cooperation, she added.

Israel isn't the only producer of innovative medical devices that Baycrest looks to. CABHI also maintains relationships with Silicon Valley and with collaborators in the Netherlands and Norway, but given its modest stature, "Israel punches above its size," Sekuler said.

The Brainmarc device reads brainwaves as patients engage in tasks. It can help clinicians determine the extent to which a patient's brain is being engaged, and design activities to better keep the brain active. That can lead to more effective therapy, Sekuler said.

Given the potential of the product and the reputation of Baycrest, other hospitals and geriatric centres are following the trials closely, Sekuler said.

ElliQ, designed by Intuition Robotics, sits on a desk or table and has a tablet connected to it.

Resembling a smooth white "Groot" that can bob its "head" and answer questions with a human voice, it is designed to serve as a companion to elderly patients.

"She's very cute," Sekuler said. "She doesn't look like a human, but she has a female voice."

About 50 ElliQs are in use at Baycrest and associated seniors facilities and it has proven so popular that "people get upset if the power goes out," Sekuler said. "People get really attached to the robot, even though it doesn't have a face."

"There's a companionship element" to ElliQ, she continued. "It uses cognitive artificial intelligence. It learns about you. It's sort of like a roommate."

ElliQ can play music at a patient's request, it will let you know if you've received new email, it can display photographs on its tablet, it can connect you to loved ones through Skype and it can play games, like bridge. Once it gets to know you, it can suggest you get up and take a walk or it can remind you to put on a sweater.

Right now, Baycrest is testing ElliQ to see if it decreases loneliness, which is thought to be a factor in cognitive decline, Sekuler said.

From pregnant women at one end of the spectrum to seniors at the other, the benefits of Israeli medical innovations are finding their way to Canada. ■

INTERNATIONAL

Trump's peace plan expected to strongly favour Israel

The CJN went to press on Monday morning, ahead of U.S. President Donald Trump's expected "Deal of the Century," his long-awaited Israeli-Palestinian peace plan. Go to www.CJNews.com for updates to this story.

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF
JERUSALEM

U.S. President Donald Trump will reportedly tell Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Blue and White Chief Benny Gantz that they have until the Knesset elections to work on the administration's long-awaited peace plan, potentially throwing the high stakes diplomatic gambit into Israel's domestic political stew.

According to a report by the *Reuters* news agency, citing a U.S. official, Trump will not announce details of the plan until after he receives buy-in from both Netanyahu and Gantz so that it does not lose any momentum.

According to the unnamed official, Trump will tell the two, "You have six weeks to get this [plan] going, if you want it."

It is unclear what either side could accomplish in even jump-starting talks based on the deal with neither having the confidence of the nation until the March 2 election. However, a number of politicians have expressed fears that releasing the plan before the vote will turn it into a political football as electoral campaigns ramp up.

Netanyahu and Gantz have faced off in successive elections for almost a year, with neither side able to form a majority government.

Both Netanyahu and Gantz were scheduled to meet with Trump, separately and privately, in the White House on Monday, and Netanyahu and Trump were set for a higher-profile meeting Tuesday.

The U.S. source, who is familiar with the administration's deliberations on the matter, told Reuters that by meeting with both Gantz and Netanyahu, it was hoped that Trump's announcement of the proposal would not be seen as a political move.

"The rationale…is it depoliticizes this to the point that, no matter what happens on March 2, the two leaders of the two largest parties can potentially be supportive," the source said.

The timing of the announcement has been criticized in Israel as an attempt to rescue Netanyahu from immunity proceedings. Many politicians and commentators also say it appears to be an effort by Trump to boost Netanyahu's prospects ahead of the March 2 election.

Mike Pence, vice-president of the U.S. meets with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem, on Jan. 23. Netanyahu arrived in Washington on Monday for talks with U.S. President Donald Trump. MATTY STERN/U.S. EMBASSY JERUSALEM PHOTO

> *I will meet with President Trump [Monday], and on Tuesday, together with him we will make history.*
>
> **Benjamin Netanyahu**

At the same time, Trump himself is in the middle of an impeachment trial.

Last Sunday, Jan. 26, former U.S. envoy Nikki Haley said the administration had grown tired of waiting for Israel to move beyond its political deadlock.

Trump was expected to deliver remarks after his Tuesday meeting with Netanyahu, where he may reveal some details of the plan.

The plan, which Trump earlier said he would release before the Tuesday meeting, is expected to strongly favour Israel, and is unlikely to garner any international support if it is seen as undermining the prospect of a two-state solution.

Trump said his administration has talked briefly to the Palestinians, who reject the administration's peace plan altogether. The Palestinian leadership has long called for the establishment of a Palestinian state along 1967 borders with east Jerusalem as its capital and a "just" solution to the refugee issue.

According to various Hebrew-language media reports, the peace plan is the most generous U.S. proposal ever for Israel, likely allowing Israel to annex all West Bank settlements and backing sovereignty throughout Jerusalem.

According to the reports, the plan also offers potential eventual recognition of Palestinian statehood, provided the Palestinians demilitarize Gaza and accept Israel as a Jewish state – conditions the Palestinians would presumably reject.

Jordan's King Abdullah II on Sunday noted his opposition to any elements of the plan which were at the expense of Jordan. Jordan, along with Egypt, is one of only two Arab nations to have a peace treaty with Israel. But relations between the neighbours have become increasingly tense, particularly with Netanyahu repeatedly vowing to annex the Jordan Valley.

Netanyahu on Sunday vowed to "make history" as he headed to Washington.

"Over the last three years, I spoke countless times with President Trump – a huge friend of Israel – and his team about these vital security needs, about our security, about our justice," Netanyahu declared. "I will meet with President Trump [Monday], and on Tuesday, together with him we will make history."

Netanyahu's main political rival, Gantz, also took off for Washington on Sunday for a separate meeting with the U.S. president.

Gantz on Saturday announced that Trump had invited him to meet "in person, as the leader of the largest party in Israel." Previously, Israel's de facto opposition leader had been invited to join Netanyahu's meeting with Trump, and had reportedly been disinclined to do so.

Asked at Ben Gurion Airport whether he would endorse the plan or ask Trump to push off its release until after the March 2 elections, Gantz demurred.

"I'll hear from him about the plan and exchange views, but what is done behind closed doors will stay behind closed doors," he told the Kan public broadcaster.

The meeting, set to be Gantz's first with the U.S. president, will be closed to the press, Blue and White said.

Gantz said that Trump's plan would come to constitute a "significant milestone," setting out the path for the conflicting sides in the Middle East "to march toward a regional, historic deal." The U.S. framework, he also said, "is likely to cause major and painful internal disagreements" within Israel. "I pledge to minimize those disagreements, but to work to make the framework a basis for progress toward an agreed deal with the Palestinians and regional states, while maintaining and deepening the strategic partnerships with Jordan, Egypt and other states in the region."

Israeli Defence Minister Naftali Bennett, leader of the pro-annexation Yamina party, on Sunday said his party would support the plan if it allows Israel to annex large swaths of the West Bank "immediately."

In a speech in the northern West Bank settlement of Ariel, Bennett called the plan a potential "once-in-50-years opportunity to apply Israeli law to half a million Israelis next week," a reference to Israelis living in the major settlements of the West Bank. ■

Times of Israel / Timesofisrael.com

Abbas reportedly turned down call from Trump

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF
RAMALLAH

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas reportedly refused to take a phone call from U.S. President Donald Trump ahead of the White House's expected release of a Mideast peace plan rejected by Ramallah as one-sided in favour of Israel.

The report by the state-run Turkish *Anadolu Agency* on Monday came ahead of separate meetings that Trump is slated to hold with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Blue and White Chief Benny Gantz in Washington, D.C., to discuss the US administration's plan to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"There were attempts by Trump to hold a phone call with Abbas, but the latter refused," a high-ranking Palestinian official, who was not named, told *Anadolu*, adding that the attempted calls took place over the weekend.

Trump said last Thursday that he would likely release the long-awaited U.S. plan this week. He said there had been some contact with the Palestinians over the issue and would be more.

PA Social Affairs Minister Ahmad Majdalani confirmed the *Anadolu* report to the Gaza-based *Dunia al-Watan* news site, stating that Abbas recently "refused a phone call from Trump."

The Palestinians have called for the establishment of a Palestinian state along 1967 borders with east Jerusalem as its capital and a "just solution" to the refugee issue.

On Monday, PA Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh urged international powers to boycott Trump's peace plan, which the PA sees as biased toward Israel.

"This a plan to protect Trump from impeachment and protect Netanyahu from prison. It is not a Middle East peace plan," Shtayyeh told a cabinet meeting. "This plan gives Israel sovereignty over Palestinian territory.

"We call on the international community to not be partners in this because it contravenes international law," he says. "The rights of the Palestinian people are not for sale."

Abbas has vowed to reject any American peace plan and has said the Palestinians have recently cut off all contacts with the U.S. other than with American security officials as a part of their commitment "to fight terrorism."

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Reports in the Israeli press in recent days had indicated that the White House was considering inviting Abbas to Washington for talks.

Azzam al-Ahmad, a member of the Palestine Liberation Organization executive committee, said he did not know of the refused call, but added that Ramallah was steadfast against discussing most diplomatic matters with the U.S.

Palestinians burn a doll bearing the portrait of U.S. President Donald Trump during a protest against the Middle East peace plan in Gaza City on Jan.27. ALI AHMED/FLASH90 PHOTO

"The president has been very clear that we will not hold any communications with Americans except through the security channel," he told the *Times of Israel*.

Ahmad said Abbas even refused to meet with Trump's senior adviser Jared Kushner in June 2018, who wanted to pay a courtesy visit after the Palestinian leader was hospitalized for several days.

Since late 2017, the Trump administration has made several moves seen as marginalizing the Palestinians: recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital, moving the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, cutting hundreds of millions of dollars in aid to the Palestinians and the UN agency that supports Palestinian refugees, and closing the PLO representative office in Washington.

Channel 12, citing unnamed Israeli sources, reported on Thursday that the Trump administration's plan calls for Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem and 100-plus settlements, as well as the establishment of a Palestinian state, on condition that the Hamas terror group gives up its weapons and the Palestinians recognize Israel as a Jewish state, with Jerusalem as its capital.

The report also said that the U.S. plan would grant Israel full security control in the Jordan Valley, and provide for some minor land swaps and a possible absorption of some Palestinian refugees in Israel; it also said if Israel accepts the plan and the Palestinians reject it, Israel would have U.S. support to begin annexing settlements unilaterally. ■

Times of Israel / Timesofisrael.com

Opinion

Time to slow down and smell the roses

Sagi Melamed

"Dad, we're medical students. We have no time to waste. We need to work to survive economically and we need to memorize and understand a lot of material to survive academically. Plus, we deserve to have a life. We're in a never-ending race. So we watch video recordings of the lectures at 1.5 playback speed, and that's also how we do everything else."

At first I thought my son Guy was joking. I could not comprehend how it was possible to listen to a medical school lecture at an unnatural speed.

"Show me how to do it on YouTube," I said. To which he responded: "Dad, it's very simple. I'm sure you can figure it out for yourself."

Well, I could not. So I asked Sivan, my 15-year-old daughter.

"Pick a YouTube video and I'll show you," she said.

I picked the song "Lalechet Shevi Acharayich" ("Devoted to You") sung by Ilanit, my favourite singer. It is a song that moves me anew every time I hear it. It is the soundtrack to my relationship with Israel.

Sivan showed me how to speed up the video to 1.5 times the normal speed. Although I could follow the immortal words when I listened to it sped up, I also found it disappointing to hear the words, "to live on and within this terrible and beautiful land … to hurt and to fall in love again," at such a high rate of speed. I felt as if Ilanit wanted to tick this song off her to do list and move on to the next.

In the book, *The Little Prince*, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry describes how the Little Prince encountered a merchant who sold pills that quenched thirst, so one would not feel the need to drink.

"Why are you selling those pills?" asked the Little Prince.

Because they save a tremendous amount of time," said the merchant. "Computations have been made by experts. With these pills, you save 53 minutes in every week."

"And what do I do with those 53 minutes?"

"Anything you like."

"As for me," said the Little Prince to himself, "if I had 53 minutes to spend as I liked, I should walk at my leisure to the spring to drink fresh water."

Of course, one cannot blame medical students for using technology to listen to lectures at higher speeds. Instead of 60 minutes to take in a lecture, they need only 40. But what of others who are constantly rushing – to get somewhere, to achieve, to advance?

A recurring motif in conversations with my children is the importance of time. They became tired of hearing their father repeatedly proclaim in their young ears whenever "boredom" was mentioned: "Time is the most precious resource given to people, yet it's constantly wasted. There is no place in this house for the word 'bored!' "

Whenever one of them would complain about school or the army, he or she would be told, "One of these days, you'll miss this!" Once they reached high school, they all admitted that they missed the obligation-free days of elementary school. When they were in the army, they told me they missed the happy days of high school. And in all probability, in the future, they will also miss (at least some of) their army experiences.

This all begs the questions: Does someone who moves faster get more done? And does someone who gets more done live a better life?

In our world, as we are faced with the sensory overload of addictive technology, our challenge is changing. No longer are we just confronted with gaining and processing as much knowledge as possible. We must develop the skills to filter and block information and re-learn how to move slower. In a society that is on fast-forward, it bodes well to listen to the Little Prince as he teaches us "to walk at leisure" and, if possible, move the speed of life back from fast forward to normal. ■

Prince heartbroken by 'hardship' of Palestinians

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF
BETHLEHEM

Britain's Prince Charles said on Friday that he was heartbroken to witness the "suffering" and "hardship" endured by the Palestinians.

The remarks by the heir to the British throne, who was visiting the West Bank town of Bethlehem, were described by Britain's Sky News TV as constituting "the biggest show of support that a member of the Royal family ever has [expressed] for the Palestinians."

Visiting the town revered by Christians as the birthplace of Jesus, Charles said: "It breaks my heart therefore that we should continue to see so much suffering and division. No one arriving in Bethlehem today could miss the signs of continued hardship, and the situation you face."

Speaking at Casa Nova, a Franciscan pilgrim house near the Church of the Nativity, Charles went on: "And I can only join you, and all communities, in your prayers for a just and lasting peace. We must pursue this cause with faith and determination, striving to heal the wounds which have caused such pain."

He added: "It is my dearest wish that the future will bring freedom, justice and equality to all Palestinians, enabling you to thrive and to prosper."

Later, after he held talks with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, the official PA news agency WAFA said Abbas told the prince he was grateful to the U.K. "for accepting the two-state solution and rejecting the U.S.-led 'deal of the century'."

U.S. President Donald Trump said Thursday he would unveil his Israeli-Palestinian peace plan within days. The PA has preemptively rejected it. The U.K. has not taken an official position on it.

Sky quoted officials representing the prince as saying he was trying to remain "neutral" in the course of his trip – his first official visit to Israel and the Palestinian territories.

During his visit to Bethlehem, the prince visited the Church of the Nativity, where he attended an unprecedented Ecumenical Service marking what his official residence, Clarence House, tweeted was the "first time that the three Christian churches have collectively held a service to celebrate the contribution of Christian communities across the Holy Land and wider Middle East."

Prince Charles lays a wreath at Yad Vashem on Jan. 23. YONATAN SINDEL/FLASH90 PHOTO

He also met with local storekeepers and iconographers, visited the Mosque of Omar, held a reception at which he met with "guests including people who work with Palestinian refugees and Palestinian Christians," Clarence House said.

According to WAFA, Abbas, hosting the prince later in the day, thanked the U.K. "for its assistance to the Palestinian people in building state institutions, as well as its assistance to the UNRWA, and for accepting the two-state solution and rejecting the US-led 'deal of the century'."

"Our hope in the near future," WAFA further quoted Abbas saying, "is that Britain recognizes the State of Palestine, because we've heard that the British Parliament recommended this to the government. So we hope that this will happen."

It said Prince Charles praised "the historical Palestinian-British relations and said he looks forward to achieving just peace in the region."

Earlier Friday, Charles visited the tomb of his grandmother, who sheltered Jews during the Holocaust and is interred at the Russian Orthodox Church of St. Mary Magdalene, just outside Jerusalem's Old City.

On Thursday, the prince met Israel's president, Reuven Rivlin, toured the Israel Museum including the Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit, met Holocaust survivors, and addressed the World Holocaust Forum at Yad Vashem. ■

Times of Israel / Timesofisrael.com

Survivors return to Auschwitz, 75 years after liberation

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF
KRAKOW, POLAND

Survivors of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp gathered Monday for commemorations marking the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the camp, using the testimony of Holocaust survivors to warn about the signs of rising anti-Semitism and hatred in the world on Jan.27.

In all, more than 200 survivors of the camp were expected, many of them elderly Jews who traveled far from homes in Israel, the United States, Australia, Peru, Russia, Slovenia and elsewhere. Many lost parents and grandparents in Auschwitz or other Nazi death camps, but on Monday were being joined in their journey back by children, grandchildren and even great-grandchildren.

Survivors dressed in blue and white striped caps and scarves symbolic of the uniforms prisoners wore at the camp, passed through its chilling "*Arbeit macht Frei*" (German for "Work sets you free") black wrought-iron gate.

Accompanied by Polish President Andrzej Duda, they laid floral wreaths by the Death Wall in Auschwitz where the Nazis shot dead thousands of prisoners.

"We want the next generation to know what we went through and that it should never happen again," Auschwitz survivor David Marks, 93, said earlier at the former death camp, his voice breaking with emotion.

Thirty-five members of his immediate and extended family of Romanian Jews were killed in Auschwitz, the largest of Nazi Germany's camps that has come to symbolize the six million European Jews who died in the Holocaust.

Most of the 1.1 million people murdered at Auschwitz were Jewish, but among those imprisoned there were also Poles and Russians, and they were also among those at a commemoration led by Duda and the head of the World Jewish Congress, Ronald Lauder.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky also attended, along with President Reuven Rivlin.

During a meeting with Duda in Poland, Rivlin noted that while "the Polish people fought with courage and strength against Nazi Germany… many Poles stood by and even assisted in the murder of Jews."

He was referring to recent efforts by the Polish government to play down the complicity of some Poles in anti-Jewish violence during and after the Holocaust while asserting that the Polish nation, like the Jewish people, was a victim of the Nazi regime.

"Preserving memory is a fundamental building block of our heritage," Rivlin said.

"Our duty is to fight a determined, clear, uncompromising battle against anti-Semitism and racism," he added. "We reach out to the Polish people today and ask work together for the future of the next generation, respecting history and inspired by peace, justice, tolerance and partnership."

Auschwitz was liberated by the Soviet army on Jan. 27, 1945.

Organizers of the event in Poland, the Auschwitz-Birkenau state memorial museum and the World Jewish Congress, have sought to keep the spotlight on survivors.

"This is about survivors. It's not about politics," Lauder said Sunday as he went to the death camp with several survivors.

Lauder warned that leaders must do more to fight anti-Semitism, including by passing new laws to fight it.

On the eve of the commemorations, survivors, many leaning on their children and grandchildren for support, walked through the place where they had been brought in on cattle cars and suffered hunger, illness and near death. They said they were there to remember, to share their histories with others, and to make a gesture of defiance toward those who had sought their destruction.

For some, it is also the burial ground for their parents and grandparents, and they will be saying *Kaddish*, the Jewish prayer for the dead.

"I have no graves to go to and I know my parents were murdered here and burned. So this is how I pay homage to them," said Yvonne Engelman, a 92-year-old who came from Australia, joined by three more generations now scattered around the globe.

She recalled being brought in from a ghetto in Czechoslovakia by cattle car, being stripped of her clothes, shaved and put in a gas chamber. By some miracle, the gas chamber that day did not work, and she went on to survive slave labour and a death march.

A 96-year-old survivor, Jeanette Spiegel, was 20 when she was brought to Auschwitz, where she spent nine months. Today she lives in New York City and is fearful of rising anti-Semitic violence in the United States.

"I think they pick on the Jews because we are such a small minority and it is easy to pick on us," she said, fighting back tears. ■

Times of Israel
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Opinion

Putin the dominant presence at Holocaust Forum

David Horowitz
JERUSALEM

Almost 50 world leaders gathered in Jerusalem Thursday for the fifth World Holocaust Forum, coinciding with the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

The vice-president of the United States, Mike Pence, was here. So, too, France's President Emmanuel Macron, and Canada's Gov. Gen. Julie Payette (see page 12). Prince Charles was in attendance, the heir to the British throne making his first official visit to Israel – a trip that, at any other time, would have dominated local headlines. Dozens of others leaders – kings, prime ministers, presidents et al. – took their seats, too, for the Forum's main event at the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial museum.

And yet there was no doubting which international dignitary had the most formidable and dominant presence: Russia's President Vladimir Putin.

Before the main event, Putin had already spoken at length, alongside Israel's President Reuven Rivlin and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, at a ceremony inaugurating a memorial to the up to 1.5 million soldiers and civilians who died in the nearly 900-day Nazi siege of Leningrad, Putin's hometown (now St. Petersburg). One of those victims was his own older brother, who died as a baby of disease.

From that ceremony in Sacher Park, at a memorial funded by two oligarchs from the former Soviet Union, the Israeli and Russian leaders made their journey through streets closed off for them to the main gathering at Yad Vashem, underwritten by the Russian billionaire Moshe Kantor, president of the European Jewish Congress and driving force behind the World Holocaust Forum. But while Rivlin and Netanyahu took their seats before the proceedings began, Putin arrived a few minutes later, was introduced separately to the audience – and was escorted by Rivlin to his seat, where the other world leaders were waiting patiently.

The presidents of Poland and Lithuania had decided to stay away from the entire Forum: Poland's Andrjez Duda was furious that he had not been invited to speak, and his Lithuanian counterpart Gitanas Nauseda was evidently of similar mind. Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky came to Jerusalem but skipped the Yad Vashem event, despite having assured this writer only a few days ago that he would attend, utilizing the transparent pretext that he and his delegation were giving up their seats for Holocaust survivors.

Russian President Vladimir Putin delivers a speech in Jerusalem on Jan. 23. MARC ISRAEL SELLEM/POOL PHOTO

All three presidents were apparently wary that Putin would use the occasion to set out his Russian narrative of the Second World War and Holocaust responsibility, at their countries' expense. With good reason.

Duda got his retaliation in first, in an op-ed he wrote last Thursday that blamed the Nazi-Soviet partnership, signed days before Hitler's invasion of Poland, for the descent into horror: "We must also not forget that the last, decisive step leading towards the Second World War, the war without which there would have been no tragedy of the Holocaust, was the secret pact between Hitler and Stalin of August 23, 1939," wrote Duda.

"The agreement meant that central and eastern Europe were deprived of its freedom and sovereignty, and the ensuing close co-operation between the two totalitarian regimes lasted until the very last hours before the attack, which Nazi Germany launched on the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. The truth about the Holocaust must not die. It must not be distorted or used for any purpose."

And, indeed, Putin did speak in terms that would have those leaders squirming uncomfortably and helplessly in their seats had they been in attendance. While highlighting the genocidal targeting of Jews in Hitler's Final Solution, the imperative to remember, and the urgent need to counter the current soaring revival of anti-Semitism, Russia's president also took time to declare that the brutal, genocidal Nazis "had accomplices whose cruelty often surpassed that of their masters."

He noted that "those death factories and concentration camps were operated not just by the Nazis but by their henchmen… from many European countries." And he offered figures for the numbers of Jewish dead in several of those countries.

Only the Red Army put a stop to all those crimes, at the unthinkable cost, Putin said, of 20 million Soviet citizens' lives lost.

Putin ended his speech with good wishes to all, including the citizens of Israel. He had been similarly gracious at the end of his Sacher Park address, putting his notes aside to express his personal appreciation for the way in which Israel had organized that ceremony.

Not only did Putin dominate the Jan. 23 ceremonies, but he had also dominated the days before and will likely dominate the days after.

Israel is seeking the release of an American-Israeli woman, Naama Issachar, sentenced by Russia to a staggering 7.5 years after being found with 10 grams of marijuana in her backpack during a stopover in Moscow.

Hebrew media has been full of reports in recent days concerning the terms Israel may or may not have worked out with Russia for her release. A global gathering intended to honor six million Jewish Holocaust victims, and to work coherently to counter reviving anti-Semitism worldwide, has – however unthinkable this may sound – been largely overshadowed in much of Israel's media coverage in the past week or two by reports on the fate of Issachar, and Putin's willingness to resolve it.

On Thursday morning, he met with her mother Yaffa, and assured her that "everything will be OK." The assumption is that Issachar will be released shortly, possibly pardoned, from a jail term to which she should self-evidently not have been sentenced in the first place – thanks to Putin's munificent intervention.

The longer question is whether Putin's centrality to Thursday's events in Jerusalem will extend all the way to our third election inside 12 months, on March 2.

There can be no doubt that this unprecedented gathering of dozens of world leaders represents a boost for Israel's legally embattled Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. His speech at Thursday's Yad Vashem ceremony was characteristically powerful and articulate – an indictment of the world's abandonment of the Jews in the Nazi era, and a stirring assertion of modern Israel's need and ability to protect the Jewish people today.

The ease with which Netanyahu circulates among the world's leaders is widely admired in Israel. The confidence with which he sets out Israel's cause and case is widely appreciated.

Through Wednesday and Thursday last week, Netanyahu was to be seen in the company of the global leadership, addressing them formally, chatting with them lightly, and winning plaudits from many, notably including Putin.

By stark contrast, the man whose party actually outscored Netanyahu's Likud in September, Benny Gantz, was a marginal presence, condemned to the sidelines — and, exactly like the president of Poland, denied the opportunity to address the Yad Vashem event.

That Putin is the region's new superstar – at centre stage in Israel, and pulling strings in Lebanon, Syria, Iran and quite possibly Gaza too – was confirmed at Yad Vashem last Thursday.

Whether anything substantial will come of this gathering in terms of battling anti-Semitism, we may start to see in the weeks or months ahead.

Whether his warm embrace of Netanyahu will help the prime minister achieve what he narrowly failed to achieve last April and September, and decisively win an election, we will discover in five weeks. ■

Times of Israel/ Timesofisrael.com

Jewish Life

Pictured, from left, production manager Ron Eldad, CEO Eitan Attir, VP of marketing Dana Baran, and Israel's first and only master distiller Tomer Goren. PHOTO COURTESY M & H DISTILLERY

Israel, the land of milk and honey – and whisky

TOBY SALTZMAN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN, TEL AVIV

More than a decade ago, a derelict bakery on the cusp of Tel Aviv and Jaffa languished as a crude site for development until a group of Sabra entrepreneurs envisioned the spot as a gem that could reflect Israel's thriving urban scenarios – its burgeoning technology, nearby Bauhaus architecture, artisanal and culinary cultures – with an intrinsically Israeli whisky.

The group of six high-tech moguls – whose success percolated dreams of crafting Israel's first, authentic, traditional-style Scotch whisky – determined to override the challenges of this land, lacking the climate or verdant soil streaming with fresh water typical of prime whisky-producing areas in Scotland, Ireland or Canada.

Anticipating a fun hobby venture, the entrepreneurs researched and developed a business plan. Ambitions grew as they realized the potential for a whisky market in Israel. They sought out chemist Jim Swan – the famed "Einstein of Whiskey" – an expert in hot climate distillation and maturation who had helped India develop its own whisky production. Nurtured by Swan's expertise, they created the Milk & Honey Distillery (M&H), pioneering Israel's first whisky distillery and, ultimately, an Israeli brand that is gaining international recognition in the global market.

M&H CEO Eitan Attir, 36, explains that Swan consulted on all aspects, defining the designs of the custom-made copper pot still and Israeli-made mash tun, handpicking the first selection of barrels and developing the recipe with kibbutznik Tomer Goren in 2012.

Goren, now 37, is officially credited as Israel's first and only official master distiller – notable for his "amazing nose and palate and ability to blend and balance whisky for the perfect product" – is renowned as a judge for international whisky competitions.

In 2014 M&H opened the state-of-the-art facility in its Tel Aviv–Jaffa location. Attir, grew up in Haifa and moved to Tel Aviv after the army. He was working as a distributor for Apple in Israel, among other startups when two of the owners, Gal and Lital Kalkshtain approached him to be CEO.

"Even though Israel had no standards for producing whisky, M&H was immediately committed to producing single malt whisky with strict standards for authentic artisanal production using Scottish techniques. As Israeli soil is not conducive to producing the best quality control barley for the best whisky, we imported barley from Muntons in the U.K."

Scottish protocol determines three years as the minimum aging time for a product to be legally labelled whisky. Israel's hot, humid coastal climate allows whisky to age in three years. Sensors meticulously control temperature of the fermentation yeast, imported from Belgium. Israel's water technology allows for reverse osmosis to customize the water flavour. M&H puts extensive effort into barrel selection, using only traditional barrels used for bourbon, Israeli wine, Cask Islay and STR casks (casks that have been shaved, toasted and recharred to expose the liquid to new oak for maximum flavour extraction).

Designated as a "New World Whisky" producer, M&H is allowed certain liberties of taste. "We honour the traditional method of double distillation of single malt with an Israeli twist by using innovative techniques. We have started placing casks around Israel, even in the Dead Sea, on a hotel roof-top. And using casks that previously aged pomegranate wine and kosher sherry."

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

A sampling of Milk & Honey's libations. TOBY SALTZMAN PHOTOS

Whisky tasting at the Milk & Honey Distillery is a celebratory must-stop, not just for locals or tourists, but for international corporations (like Dell and Microsoft) who plan inspired events amid Tel Aviv's urban start-ups in this place spawned by entrepreneurial start-ups themselves. All in good taste, visitors are guided with sensuous tips in colour, aroma and flavour on the palate to distinguish between smooth, sophisticated, and peaty whiskies. The heady impact grows easily if they also indulge in sips of M&H Levantine Gin or Roots Herbal Liquor.

Since its first single malt whisky sold at auction in 2017, M&H has distributed across Israel. Its wines are offered on El Al flights, and are internationally being distributed across Australia, and – as this article is written – in Canada and the United States. Attir says they are aiming for 25 different markets by 2021.

"Although our whisky is kosher, we do not want to be stuck on kosher shelves like Israeli kosher wines. We're creating interest in the world for a strikingly different whisky taste experience that only M&H can bring."

As Israel's first whisky distillery – in the land where wine is the traditional libation for Shabbat and life-cycle events – M&H is credited with spurring a whisky culture. For example, the restaurant Whiskey Bar & Museum located in an ancient underground tunnel supposedly carved by Knights Templar as a winery – is popular in Tel Aviv's Sarona Market for having one of the world's largest whisky collections. Master distiller Goren created the Whisky Live Israel Expo in Tel Aviv, attracting sold-out crowds annually to taste M&H alongside Glenlivet, Ballantine's, Aberlour, Glenmorangie, Glenfiddich and more.

M&H's pioneering production spawned others to create distilleries in unique geographic areas such as the Golan Heights Distillery in the ancient city of Katzrin. Pelter Distillery in the Golan Heights' Ein Zivan also makes brandy from dates. The Legends Distillery in the Elah Valley and Edrei Distillery in Katzrin (incidentally started by a former Montreal corporate lawyer who made aliyah) are apparently growing their own barley for a purely Israeli product. The Jerusalem Distilling Company also creates rum, gin and Tunisian date liquor.

Competition delights Attir: "A growing number of distilleries is key to establishing a real whisky industry in Israel." ■

M&H Whisky will be distributed in Canada by Craftworks Spirits. www.craftworkspirits.com. M&H Whisky Distillery visit https://mh-distillery.com

The M & H Distillery tasting room.

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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
JANUARY 30, 2020

A music class that connects people of all ages

BARBARA SILVERSTEIN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

David Warrack plays piano and singer/actor Patrick Rose conducts the Broadway showtunes sing-along class run by the Avenue Road Arts School. BRIAN DEMUDE PHOTO

On a Monday evening people begin arriving at a midtown Toronto church for their music class half an hour early. They mill around the social hall kibitzing with their fellow classmates and setting out the snack for the evening.

It's hard to miss the camaraderie among the students who range in age from 20-something to 90-plus years. Age is not a factor for this group. They all share a love of Broadway show tunes and they gather weekly to sing those songs together.

The class is run by the Avenue Road Arts School (ARAS). Lola Rasminsky founded the school in 1993, but its roots actually date back some 40 years when Rasminsky started an afternoon art program for children in her home.

Today the school – it's located in a rambling house on Avenue Road near St. Clair Avenue – offers classes for adults and children in visual arts like ceramics, painting and photography and performing arts like the sing-along class for Broadway showtunes.

This class – it has been running for 26 years – is held in a church near the school to accommodate the large group, explains Rasminsky.

The music is so "uplifting," that it's the only ARAS classes that she attends regularly, she says, pointing out that many of the participants have been there for 20 years.

Actor/singer Patrick Rose began conducting the weekly sing-along 26 years ago, while award-winning pianist/composer David Warrack has accompanied the group for about 20 years.

Rasminsky says the class is geared to people who want to sing their favourite showtunes with other people. "Singing experience is not necessary."

And you need not know the words to any songs. The participants sing from books with the words from hundreds of show tunes. The offerings include songs from modern Broadway musicals like *Rent* and *Phantom of the Opera* and classics like *The King and I* and *Oklahoma*.

"You don't have to be a singer you just have to have enthusiasm," Mervin Lass says. He's been attending the class for 21 years.

He said he feels so close to the group that in the fall he chose to mark his 90th birthday in class.

He had 15 members of his family attend, Rasminsky recounts. "The meal was catered by Sonny Langer.

"There were many tributes sung to him that night. The students and the instructors performed. It was a very moving evening."

She points to Herb Samuels, a regular for some 20 years. "Herb makes up a song every single week."

Arlene Abramsky, trained as an opera singer at the University of Toronto and she sang in the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir. She joined the class five years ago. "This is exactly what I looking for.

"I wanted to sing show tunes with a group."

Rosalie Roebuck says she comes to the class because she loves music and Broadway.

The appeal for Pattie Goodman is her love of singing. "It's better than therapy. I feel happy to be here."

She has been attending the class for 26 years.

"My mother could play piano and we sang all the time. I remember the old songs, the golden oldies from the Broadway shows of the '40s and '50s. The words reach deep into the psyche. They're the oldies, but the goodies."

On this night the group is singing some oldies. They've selected songs from *My Fair Lady*, circa 1956. They belt out: "I Could Have Danced All Night," "I'm Getting Married in the Morning," and "With a Little Bit of Luck."

Then the music jumps to the '60s with the group's rendition of "The Age of Aquarius," a hit song from the 1967 rock musical, *Hair*.

About midway through the class, the group stops for a break. It's time for a snack and more schmoozing.

The class is a lot of fun, muses Samuels. "There's good camaraderie and we even do a little singing." ■

Registration for the spring session opens this week. For more information visit www.avenueroadartsschool.com

Toronto musician reimagines old-time roots music

RUTH SCHWEITZER
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Rick "Mr. Rick" Zolkower, a musician who has made a career out of interpreting traditional Americana – folk music, bluegrass, blues, ragtime and bluesy gospel music – learned how to play harmonica and guitar at the feet of some of the musical icons of the 1960s.

At the Chessmate club in his native Detroit, Zolkower saw Dave Van Ronk, the Jim Kweskin Jug Band, Reverend Gary Davis, Lightnin' Hopkins, John Lee Hooker, Doc Watson, Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf.

Although Zolkower, who was in his late teens at the time, spoke to many of the performers about how they played their instruments, he never approached Wolf, a giant of a man with a reputation for violence.

"Howlin' Wolf, I was scared of. I never talked to Howlin' Wolf, but it turned out he was actually one of the nicer guys of all of them," Zolkower, who will be playing in Toronto at the Winterfolk Blues and Roots Festival, said.

Even as a preteen, Zolkower had been listening to traditional Americana – or old-time roots music – on his transistor radio late at night. "I could pick up radio stations from Georgia, Mississippi, Ohio, Indiana, all over the south of where we were in the States."

Growing up in Detroit, Zolkower attended a high school where the majority of students were African-Americans, and their parents listened to blues and R&B. "It's a trickle-down effect. You're inside of a culture and you just start to hear what that culture provides, what kind of music. In Detroit it was not difficult to hear African-American music of all different kinds," he said.

Zolkower's first instrument was harmonica – a harp as it's called in the blues world – and in 1968, he became the singer and harp player of a band that performed original blues.

For a while, Zolkower performed at open stages at the other side of town as a solo act. "I was too scared to play guitar and sing in front of people I knew," he said.

He began playing guitar – Zolkower is a fingerstyle guitarist – after he bought a Martin D-28 acoustic guitar in 1969. "Fingerstyle guitar, you're playing it like a piano in the sense that you're supplying the rhythm and the melody," he said. "Just strumming a guitar, you're playing chords and rhythm. Fingerstyle guitar you're playing chords, rhythm and melody."

Rick Zolkower

He began performing in Canada when he moved here in 1972, after getting involved in a romantic relationship with a Canadian woman. The relationship didn't work out, but Zolkower's been living and working here ever since.

Since then, he's recorded his interpretations of old-time roots music on three albums: *Cocktails and Cornbread* and *Whole Grain*, with his band, Mr. Rick & the Biscuits, and *Mr. Rick Sings About God and Booze*.

The album *Mr. Rick Sings About God and Booze* includes the song "Liquor Store Blues," which was recorded by Sleepy John Estes in 1938. "A lot of those old blues, they sound pathetically simple," Zolkower said. "Then go try to do what that the artist has done, the part that you think is weak guitar playing, or it's sloppy, go try to do it. Then you realize how tough some of this actually is, because you're trying to copy someone who spent a lifetime doing what they do."

Instead of attempting to copy other artists, Zolkower reimagines their recordings. "Very often the songs that I'm playing, I've heard that song from two, three, up to five different people. I'm usually combining two to three elements from other artists that I blend together," he said. "I have songs where the guitar playing is actually from one artist and then the melody and the feel of the song is from a different person and I kind of mix it together." ■

Zolkower is performing in Toronto at the Winterfolk Blues and Roots Festival, Feb. 21 to 23. Visit winterfolk.com.

Shabbat Shirah Celebration
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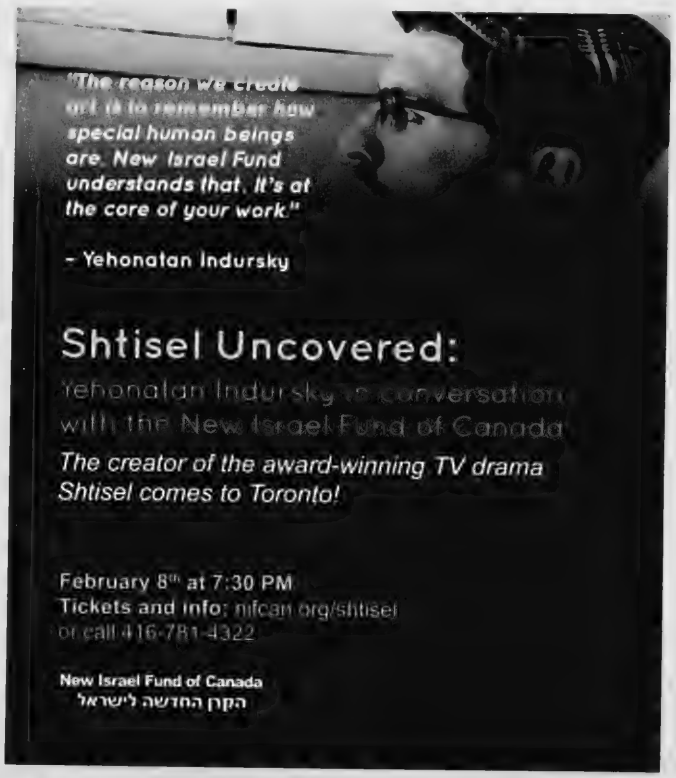
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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
JANUARY 30, 2020

The wonderful world of Jewish family histories

BILL GLADSTONE
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Having written a couple of books of family histories for various branches of my family, I understand how difficult it is to unite the stories of dozens, or hundreds, of people under a common theme. That is part of the reason why I admire Edmund De Waal's masterpiece, *The Hare With Amber Eyes*, which was first published in 2010.

So when I was faced with a trio of new family histories to review, it was only natural that I would go back to *The Hare With Amber Eyes*, which I consider an exemplar of the form. The narrative covers four or five generations of the Ephrussi clan, a famed Jewish banking family who lived like nobles and aristocrats in Odessa, Vienna, Paris and other European capitals.

Like the Rothschilds, the Ephrussis were an extraordinary family whose experiences contrasted sharply with the poor ghetto Jews who made up the majority of the Jewish world. De Waal captures the personalities and private lives of the larger-than-life worlds of his forebears with poetic and Proustian expansiveness. Through the sheer force of his imagination, De Waal paints a series of colourful portraits of each of his ancestors, especially his grandmother, all the while focusing on the family's collection of netsuke, tiny Japanese objets d'art that were handed down through the generations, providing the book's unifying theme.

Having been impressed with this book when it first came out, I reread the more recent illustrated edition and found the experience nicely enhanced by the visual accompaniments. There is an understated tragic irony about this story because these tiny art objects from Japan are pretty much all that is left of the vast Ephrussi fortune after both time and the Nazis, as well as the vicissitudes of the stock market, exercised their destructive powers.

For De Waal, the journey was a sort of detective story: he wanted to explain and understand how these netsuke came into his own hands after his last great-uncle, Jiri, died in Tokyo.

"What is being passed on to me with all these small Japanese objects?" he writes. "I realize that I've been living with this netsuke business for too long. I can either anecdotalise it for the rest of my life – my odd inheritance from a beloved elderly relative – or go and find out what it means." Fortunately for his readers, De Waal chose the latter course.

Like De Waal, Sarah Abrevaya Stein, in her book *Family Papers, A Sephardi Journey Through the Twentieth Century*, conveys an excellent sense of culture and history as she writes about the fortunes of various members of the Levy family from Salonica, Greece.

The book offers portraits of a diverse range of family members, based on a trove of family letters and papers that her relatives possessed. Abrevaya Stein enhanced the content of the letters through research conducted at some 30 archives in 10 countries.

The patriarch of the family was Sa'adi Levy, a prominent publisher and editor born in 1820 who printed two major newspapers, as well as works in the Sephardic language of Ladino. His son, Daout Levy, one of his 14 children, headed Salonica's Jewish community when the city hosted citizens of three major faiths and was considered one of the most Jewish cities in the world. It was a place where Ladino could be heard commonly spoken in the streets and along the docks.

Like the world of the Ephrussis, the world of the Levys also fell apart cataclysmically. The Balkan Wars of 1912-13 saw the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Then came more upheavals with the First World War and a devastating fire in 1917. The era of multiculturalism and pluralism dissolved into a political culture of competing nationalisms, with the Turks and Greeks engaging in a tug of war that continues to this day.

The final blow came with the Second World War, when about 98 per cent of Salonica's Jews were wiped out. In November 1942, hammering another nail into the coffin, the Nazis rounded up 1,000 Greek Jews living in Paris, including Daout's son, Emmanuel Levy, and his family, and deported them to Auschwitz.

Shockingly, one of Sa'adi Levy's great-grandsons, Vital Hasson, aided and abetted the Nazis as they brutally strangled the Salonica Jewish ghetto and deported the Jews to death camps. This vicious kapo was convicted of war crimes and executed in 1948. Abrevaya Stein asserts that he "was the only Jew in Europe tried as a war criminal and killed by a state, Greece, at the behest of its Jewish community."

Abrevaya Stein mentions the letters, but doesn't utilize them enough to give us a sense of the voices they contain. Her book retains a fragmented quality owing to the difficulty of weaving together such vastly different narratives into a cohesive whole.

The discovery of a collection of wartime letters in a desk drawer led Judy Vasos to write *My Dear Good Rosi: Letters from Nazi-Occupied Holland 1940-1943*. The letters were written by her husband's grandparents, Hugo and Clementine Mosbacher, to their daughter Rosi, the author's mother-in-law, during the occupation.

At the start of the war, Hugo and Clementine Mosbacher fled to Holland from their longtime home in Nuremberg. They were awaiting their visas to go to the United Stated, which they expected to receive in only two more days, when Germany invaded Holland. Instead of escaping to the U.S., they became two of the roughly 100,000 mostly Jewish inmates of the Westerbork concentration camp who were deported to Auschwitz or Sobibor. Again, tragic irony pervades the pages of Jewish family histories.

Although Georgia Hunter's *We Were the Lucky Ones* is a novel, it is based on a family history that she knew nothing about until she was 15-years-old. She undertook enormous research to uncover the saga of three generations of the Kurc family of Radom, Poland. Her canvas extends from the jazz clubs of Paris to the snowy sweeps of the Siberian gulags.

Each of the four books named in this review handles family history in a different way: De Waal uses novelistic techniques to his advantage, while remaining true to the facts; Hunter takes this a step further to construct a fictional tale that is based on actual events. As in all writings about historical matters, the line between myth and history, fact and fiction, is often blurred in the service of a greater truth. ■

Bill Gladstone is the author of numerous books including One Hundred Years in Canada: the Rubinoff-Naftolin Family Tree *(2008).*

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Connecting Jewish culture and life through poetry

ROBERT HIRSCHFIELD
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Norman Finkelstein begins his book with a tale of two Shapiros, Karl and Harvey. Secular American poets, they distanced themselves from traditional religious Judaism, but culturally and artistically, they kept going back to their biblical roots and mythologies.

"In his *151st Psalm*, Karl Shaipro asks: 'Are you looking for us? We are here. Have you been gathering flowers, Elohim? We are your flowers, we have always been. When will you leave us alone? We are in America.'"

A less conflicted root sorter with a sense of humour, Harvey Shapiro was Finkelstein's mentor. His "profound insights into American Jewish life" anchors the author's examination of Jewish poetry in America, and how it informs being Jewish in the largely post-traditional Diaspora.

In his poem, "Book Group," Shapiro focuses on the event that for many modern Jews operates as a parallel tradition: the Holocaust.

"An entire culture/ was wiped out, leaving only/ the vaudeville Jews of America/ and the critic in the group says/ the theme is survival and/ everyone cries paradox! paradox!"

The existential dilemma of being spiritually and historically stranded, in exile from the source, and the creative energy it generates, is a key element in Finkelstein's *Like A Dark Rabbi: Modern Poetry and the Jewish Literary Imagination*. The author, a professor of modern and contemporary American literature at Xavier University in Cincinnati, is himself a poet whose work, he writes, "turns to and turns upon, the matter of modern Jewish identity."

Dark Rabbi (title comes from a Wallace Stevens poem) comes with a resident ghost, Yiddish. Spoken as children by Harvey Shapiro and Charles Reznikoff, Yiddish, ultimately abandoned for English, was later resurrected in the tonality of their poems. It also flourishes as the language of longing for non-Yiddish speaking poets like Jacqueline Osherow. In *Ch'vil Schreiben a Poem auf Yiddish* (I want to write a poem in Yiddish), she contemplates a poem so Yiddish, it would not be possible to translate.

Like A Dark Rabbi: Modern Poetry and the Jewish Literary Imagination
by Norman Finkelstein
Hebrew Union College Press

Reznikoff, focusing on a shirt gone missing in the laundry, has his laundryman examine all the contradictory possibilities in the Talmudic style before his wife concludes, "We won't have to go the rabbi about it, will we?"

Son of Russian Jewish immigrants who fled the late-19th century pogroms, Reznikoff, though married to Zionist leader, Marie Syrkin, never visited Israel. While

Norman Finkelstein

turning often in his work to Biblical and exilic themes, he is best known to many as a poet of the New York street, a walking advertisement for the multi-ethnic wonders and fluidity of the diaspora.

Finkelstein, in the words of scholar Harold Bloom, summarizes Reznikoff as embodying "wandering meaning." A phrase that could be applied to a whole raft of thoughtful Western Jews.

Dark Rabbi's richness is the way it contains this multi-dimensional, contradictory, sacred and profane, but always throbbingly alive poetics. It might be likened to a mysterious broad river never content to flow in just one coherent direction.

Writing about feminist Chana Bloch, Finkelstein is struck by the way she dances reproachfully with Jewish tradition as it steps on her feet:

"If the egg had one drop of blood in it/ the rabbis said 'throw it away!'/ as if they could legislate/ perfection. Dress the bride in/ white petticoats! Let there be/ no spot/ on your ceremony!

Admiring but not uncritical, Finkelstein label's Bloch's normal, anecdotal, "emotionally expressive" first person poetry, as "workshop poetry."

Her antithesis is perhaps Michael Heller. A "philosophical poet," grandson and great-grandson of two rabbis, his eclecticism is breathtaking. Influenced by Jewish scholars Walter Benjamin and Gershon Scholem, he was also, for a while, a student of Tibetan Buddhist teacher Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche. His poetry dances with "other selves" and the "masks of selves" in the spirit of Whitman, but also works to find the language to "repair and rebuild" in the spirit of Lurianic Kabbalah

"Most high, let us walk the ordered esplanade!/ Let us carry high the numerous and the just whirlwinds./ Let us grasp the circle: let us catch the assailing blue."

Yet Heller could at the same time reflect, "how little words counted against the strange unknowableness of the world."

Paradox as the dreidel of Jewish displacement.

The ultimate irony of this displacement is to be found in Finkelstein's study of Buffalo born Israeli poet, Rachel Tzvia Back. An Israeli since the age of twenty-one, Back's poems about Israel are suitably pained and loving, but written in English.

In the Galilean hills, she writes, "where Hebrew and Arabic are the spoken languages, my English language poetry wanders ever as an outsider. In significant ways, and certainly in connection to my poetry, I reside fully in the paradox of being ever a foreigner at home."

In his scholarly wanderings, Finkelstein has constructed an exemplary crooked bridge across which Jewish culture and Jewish life merge. ■

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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
JANUARY 30, 2020

Female cantor sings anthems at Toronto Raptors game

PAUL LUNGEN
plungen@thecjn.ca

When not leading the Raptors to a miraculous comeback, Aviva Rajsky leads the singing at Habonim Congregation.

A Toronto hazzanit likely hit "11" on the cool mom-meter when she sang before a crowd of nearly 20,000, which included her three children, at a Toronto Raptors game.

As a cantor, Aviva Rajsky sings before much smaller crowds, a few hundred perhaps, but when she was tagged to sing the national anthems at the game at the Scotia Bank Arena in Toronto on Dec. 21, well that elevated her into the realm of, "your mom did that?"

Adding to her auspicious performance was the fact that it was also the first day of Hanukkah and the Raptors staged a somewhat miraculous comeback overcoming a 30-point deficit to defeat the Dallas Mavericks, 110-107. It was the greatest comeback in franchise history, or as people like to say around that time of year, "*nes gadol hayah sham*."

Rajsky doesn't like to brag, but the Raptors' comeback prompted many calls, texts and emails from friends and family who noticed the coincidence: that after the anthems were performed by a Jewish singer, a cantor no less, on Hanukkah, a miracle of sorts did take place.

Rajsky is happy to take credit – for likely being the first female cantor to perform the national anthems at a Raptors game, not necessarily for summoning divine intervention to help the local basketball team.

Still, it's something she hopes the Raptors take notice of.

In the meantime, Rajsky continues to make music. About 20 or 30 times a year, she is chazzanit at Habonim Congregation, a fast-growing synagogue that hosts High Holiday services as well as Shabbat services about 25 to 30 times a year.

Rajsky is also in the middle of cutting a jazz album with collaborator Tom Bellman, who also accompanies her on guitar at Habonim. The album is based on original material written by Bellman, with lyrics by Barbie Nichol.

It's a sophisticated brand of music, hearkening back to the kind of standards once made popular by Ella Fitzgerald – classy and accessible, Rajsky said.

Rajsky can also belt out a country tune, and while she and Bellman jazz up traditional songs for synagogue, there's no crossover where you'd find hymns to fast cars, booze and roadside bars in any of them.

For as long as she can remember, Rajsky has had music in her blood. Singing *zemirot* (Sabbath hymns) was a regular event for her family, and her mother used to joke that if you opened her up, you'd find music inside, Rajsky quipped.

It all stood her in good stead as she embarked on a career in music. At one time, Rajsky made a pretty good living as a piano bar singer. Her piano bar career, which included stints in Switzerland and Israel, was followed by one in which she began officiating and singing at bar and bat mitzvahs, as well as weddings.

She also put together a female jazz quartet, the Jazzabelles and has sung at many high profile events, including the funeral for Barry and Honey Sherman, the Wiesenthal Spirit of Hope event and the International March of the Living in Birkenau on the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War.

Eli Rubenstein, spiritual leader at Habonim, said the shul "has over 150 families on its waiting list, largely because of Aviva's singing."

"Aviva is, bar none, one of the most gifted individuals I have ever met. Her musical ability is extraordinary. Aviva also plays piano, composes music, conducts our choir and arranges all the harmonies.

"Service after service, her soul stirring voice deeply touches her audience in a way I rarely seen in another singer."

In 2006, Rajsky was asked to help her friend, Lisa Kent, during the High Holidays at the Danforth Jewish Circle.

"That's when I got hooked on leading services," she said.

But it was her song styling at a bar mitzvah that prompted one of the guests to suggest she contact Rubenstein about an opening there as an associate cantor under Esther Ghan Firestone, the first female cantor in Canada.

Her "audition" consisted of singing during the second day of Rosh Hashanah, around 10 years ago.

"I opened my mouth and I channeled Cantor Harold Klein," she said, referring to the hazzan at the Shaarei Shomayim, her family's shul.

"After that service, I felt changed. I felt like Moses coming down from the mountain, visibly different," she said.

As it turns out, one of the members at Habonim is Judy Tanenbaum, wife of Larry Tanenbaum, who is part owner of the Raptors. She suggested Rajsky record a demo singing the national anthems and submit it to the team. She did so and quickly received a response: "Are you available to sing on Dec. 21, which at the time was only two weeks away?"

Yes of course, she replied, bringing along her children, aged 21, 20 and 18.

Until now, singing the anthems has been a once-in-a-lifetime experience, but given the game's outcome and her apparent ability to summon divine intervention, Rajsky is available for future Raptors games.

Not to mention, weddings and bar and bat mitzvahs. ■

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YidLife's Batalion satirizes startup rat race in Appiness

JANICE ARNOLD
jarnold@thecjn.ca, MONTREAL

Fans of the YidLife Crisis comedy series can now watch its co-creator Eli Batalion in his first feature film *Appiness*, a send-up of the highly competitive world of young wannabe tech entrepreneurs.

Batalion co-stars as the introverted Jewish Eric Newman opposite the Indo-Canadian Raj Patel (Varun Saranga), an old high school buddy he by chance runs into years later when both are at a low point in their yet to launch careers.

Approaching 30, Newman has been laid off from his desk job plunging him into even more insecurity and despair than he had at the best of times.

The hyper, ever-optimistic Patel believes he has the next big idea for an app. He proposes that they team up and develop something that will rival Facebook and make them billionaires.

Newman, Patel suggests, has the brains and he has the business smarts.

What follows is a hapless (appless?) quest to find a venture capitalist who will listen to their pitch.

Appiness is a fast-paced 82 minutes of zany encounters that offer insight into what

Eli Batalion, left, and Varun Saranga are buddies who scheme to build the next great app.

really happens behind the façade of creative collegiality among young tech aspirants.

Newman and Patel do find a congenial and more levelheaded collaborator in Jeanine Genet (Montreal's Amber Goldfarb) in this movie, shot in Montreal with an all-Canadian crew.

Getting *Appiness* to public distribution has been a long slog for Batalion, who played the cerebral, uptight Leizer to Jamie Elman's laidback, irreverent Chaimie in their original Yiddish-language hit web series launched in 2014.

The former Bialik High School pals have gone on to make lighthearted documentaries, typically focusing on food, including the most recent, *Cheuxdaism: A Taste of Jewish Montreal*, which continues to tour film festivals and made it to theatrical release.

Batalion, who is actually approaching 40, began writing *Appiness* more than seven years ago, inspired by his own stint in the startup world. He's also the director, producer and co-composer of the film's score.

Appiness was completed 1-1/2 years ago, and has been on the indie circuit and shown at one local festival, the mainly francophone Les Rendez-vous Québec Cinéma. It won the Debut Filmmaker Award at the Calcutta International Cult Film Festival.

Getting *Appiness* to the commercial market was tough, almost as hard as securing financing, says Batalion.

Finally, *Appiness* was picked up by California-based Gravitas Ventures, a video on-demand (VOD) company and, as of Jan. 28, has been available on several streaming services and cable VOD.

Of his own experience among techies, Batalion says, "It was an interesting environment, fast-paced, but a lot of pressure, there's a lot of pretending and make-believe on the long journey to entrepreneurship. It's about faking it until you make it. That's the reality the outside world doesn't see."

While Batalion was used to being part of a comedic duo, playing opposite a character from a different background was refreshing.

He discovered that he shared with Saranga, who has had roles in the television series *Wynonna Earp* and *Schitt's Creek*, a family background that placed a high value on professional success.

Has he found 'appiness yet? Batalion is just glad he never really wasted years pursuing a tech pipe dream. ■

מזל טוב!
Mazel Tov!
Feel like kvelling?
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with a description
of up to 25 words to
www.CJNews.com/mazeltov.
For any questions, email
jgreen@thecjn.ca.
Happy 7th birthday, Jackie! You are full of love, life, sassiness and spunk. We love you and wish you an amazing birthday and year to come. Love, Mommy, Daddy, Issy and Vicky
Mazel tov to Papa Woolfie Frysh on his 99th birthday
With love from his children, grandchildren
and great-grandchildren
To Raymond, on his special birthday, from wife Shelley, daughters Michelle (in Israel) and Jessie (in Ottawa), and grandchildren. Funny, you don't look 70!
Happy 95th birthday to the man, the myth, the legend, Papa Joe. Love, your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren!

Parashah

Bo Exodus 10:1-13:16

Claire Lipton examines Moses' wisdom and perceptiveness
Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl explains how Jewish culture reveres memory
Rabbi Catharine Clark says it's time to start thinking about where God fits in your Passover seder

Claire Lipton

Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl

Rabbi Catharine Clark

Moses' wisdom and perceptiveness throughout this week's parashah serve as yet another instance of his exemplary leadership ability, and furthermore, a lesson in preserving Judaism for generations to come that is still relevant thousands of years later.

As the plagues inflicted upon the Egyptians continued to worsen, Pharaoh remains adamant that the Hebrews are not to leave Egypt. Moses requests that his people be allowed to go to the desert for three days in order to worship God, mentioning that if Pharaoh refuses, a swarm of locusts will consume Egypt in its entirety. Pharaoh's servants beg him to accept Moses' request. Pharaoh listens to his courtiers and swiftly agrees to Moses' request, but asks who exactly would be going. Moses replies that everyone, both young and old, parents along with children, and even livestock, would go. Pharaoh does not change his decision, but limits the people he would allow to leave, decreeing that only men could go. God then instructs Moses to stretch out his hand to commence the plague of locusts.

While an argument can be made that God simply did not want to split up the nation, there is a deeper meaning. God not only cared for the safety and well-being of the nation, but He also remained focused on ensuring the Jewish religion would continue to be passed to the next generation, and therefore it was imperative that the children come to the desert to worship. In order to pass on traditions, children must be present and the entire community must be dedicated to worshipping and making sacrifices to praise God.

This lesson remains relevant today, where not only do parents bear the responsibility of passing the foundations of Judaism on to their children, but also have the opportunity to pass down their unique traditions and customs as well. It is vital that we, too, dedicate ourselves to passing on Judaism to our children, because as the Talmud says, one who teaches his son Torah, teaches his son's son as well, "until the end of all generations." ■

Claire Lipton is a Grade 11 student at TanenbaumCHAT in Toronto.

Anthony Ashley-Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, famously observed, "The now; the now. Mind this: in this is all." We live in the present, and that is where we must concentrate our thoughts and actions. In contrast, our Torah contains the commandment, "Remember this day, when you went out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, because the Eternal took you out of here with a mighty hand" (Exodus 13:3).

Judaism has a culture that reveres memory, establishes it through ritual (Passover, tefillin, tzitzit) and uses it as a motivation for future action (such as the commandment in Exodus 23:9: "You shall not oppress a stranger … for you were strangers in the land of Egypt").

In *The Ethics of Memory*, Israeli philosopher Avishai Margalit argues that memory is rooted in specific geography, monuments and stories. The "thick" relationships of family and friendship create ethical obligations to remember particular people, and collective memory gives meaning and substance to being part of a tribe and nation. In contrast, "thin" relationships – to people with whom we share only a common humanity – cannot be expected to carry the ethical obligations associated with memory.

The participation of the Governor General of Canada and other international dignitaries to mark the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau is part of an effort by the European and North American nations with thick memories of the Holocaust to influence the thin relationships and recollections of other nation-states.

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), which developed a working definition of anti-Semitism and seeks to curtail Holocaust denial, expands the memory of the Shoah beyond our small Jewish community. These efforts serve as an example of using the past to influence the future. Memory becomes an ethical springboard to prevent future crimes against humanity and acts of genocide. These are contemporary universal examples of the ancient injunction: "Remember this day, when you went out of Egypt." ■

Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl is rabbi emeritus at Beth Tzedec Congregation in Toronto.

What message do you send to your children and grandchildren at the Passover seder? What message do you think your children and grandchildren actually hear?

I mean to convey to my children that learning Hebrew is important and that Passover is the best holiday ever (except for Sukkot). The message they actually hear is probably that we should do seder fast because Mommy is tired.

Neither message is the right one. Seder also is not the place for messages about fighting anti-Semitism, having lots of Jewish children or protecting the environment – no matter how much you might want to send these messages.

Rather, Parashat Bo sets forth a clear message for the seder: we tell the story of Passover because of what "the Lord did for me when I went forth from Egypt." At the seder, we are intended to take seriously the belief that God acts powerfully on our behalf and that God commands actions from us. One such commanded action is that we tell the story in the haggadah, emphasizing God's miraculous role in our redemption.

Some of us would rather talk about anything but God at the seder because we are not sure what, if anything, we believe about God. If that's the case for you, I recommend Rabbi Neil Gillman's book *Doing Jewish Theology*. It will help you understand the wide range of normative thinking about God in our tradition and put your spiritual experiences in context.

Others of us would rather not talk about God at the seder because we don't want to sound naive or old-fashioned. If that's your worry, let this be your biggest concern about the seder. It beats worrying about whether your uncle will broadcast his wacko political opinions non-stop or stressing over whether you have enough brisket – you do, by the way. With that worry out of the way, start thinking about what you'll say about God at the seder this year. ■

Rabbi Catharine Clark is the spiritual leader of Congregation Or Shalom, a Conservative synagogue in London, Ont.

Social Scene

Lance Davis, Earl Rotman, Ariella Rohringer, Wendy Cole, Michael Shulman, Carole Zucker, Stephen Cole, Wendy Eisen, Darren Slavens, Wendy Eidinger Spatzner, Jerry Werger, Jackie Shulman, Winston Siegel and Jeff Springer

Negev Dinner

TORONTO

The Jewish National Fund of Toronto held its 71st annual Negev Dinner which honoured Wendy Eisen and Carole Zucker. Proceeds from the 2019 Toronto Negev Dinner will support The Wendy Eisen & Carole Zucker JNF Fund to combat anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism. The dinner featured the band The Tenors, and special guests, Israel's Musicians of Tomorrow, who played to a crowd of 1,500. ■

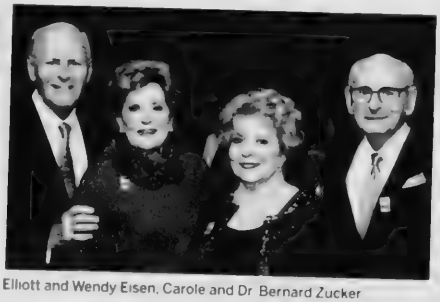
David Baskin, Joan Garson and Michael Shulman

Rhonda Wolfond, Lisa Wolfond, Chad Wolfond, Henry Wolfond and Rochelle Reichert

Nathan Disenhouse, Toronto Mayor John Tory, Shelley Werger and Elaine Disenhouse

Marvin and Joyce Tanner

Vered and Jay Feldman



Elliott and Wendy Eisen, Carole and Dr. Bernard Zucker

Ilana Lazar, Victor and Ella Jacobs, Danielle and Joe Zarmati

NICK WONS, JAG GUNDU AND YARON EINI PHOTOS

What's New

JAN. 30 - FEB. 6

by Lila Sarick

Friday, Jan. 31

TU B'SHEVAT SERVICE
Temple Har Zion celebrates Tu b'Shevat, with guest speaker **Michelle Singh**, 8 p.m.

Saturday, Feb. 1

CANTORIAL SHABBAT
Lodzer Centre Congregation holds a special cantorial Shabbat service led by **Cantor David Young** and his choir, featuring original compositions, traditional and modern pieces, 9:30 a.m., 12 Heaton St.

EL AL FLIGHT CREW
Members of El Al flight crew speak at Beth Emeth, noon.

Sunday, Feb. 2

TEFILLIN WRAP AND BOOK CLUB
Jerry Scherer of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Toronto discusses DNA testing at the Worldwide Tefillin Wrap, 8 a.m. at Beth Emeth. **Max Eisen** discusses his book, *By Chance Alone*, at 10 a.m. $5. Register at beby.org, or 416-633-3838

THE ANTI-SEMITISM TOOLBOX
Krav Maga family workshop, 2-5 p.m. Register via eventbrite.ca. $10 per family. Chabad Romano, 10500 Bathurst St. Details: Jewsagainstantisemitismcanada@gmail.com.

HAIRCUTS FOR CANCER PATIENTS
Zichron Menachem holds a day of haircuts, to make wigs for Israeli cancer patients, starting at 10:30 a.m., Ben's Secrets Hair Studio, 1102 Centre St., Thornhill. Register for an appointment at zichron.ca@gmail.com or 416-258-3041.

Deadline:
The deadline for submissions for the Feb. 13 paper is Feb. 3. All deadlines are at noon.
Phone: 416-391-1836 ext. 269;
email: **whatsnewcjn@gmail.com**.

Cooking for a good cause

Members of the Mosaic Outdoor Club made hundreds of sandwiches, wraps and desserts to send out on Ve'ahavta's homeless response van earlier this month. About 20 volunteers also collected and delivered warm clothing, blankets and sleeping bags.

LEARNING FOR WOMEN
Ezer Diena discusses "Splitting of Multiple Seas? Yam Suf Analogies in Yehoshua and Yeshayah," and **Lea New Minkowitz** discusses "Rejoicing Upon the Death of an Enemy," 10-11:20 a.m., BAYT. Free. Details: info@torontotorah.com or 416-630-6772 ext. 243.

Monday, Feb. 3

FAMILY LAW IN MISHNAH
Rabbi Lawrence Englander discusses "Family Law in the Mishnah and Beyond," Mondays until March 2, 7 p.m., Temple Sinai. 416-487-4161.

SCOTCH TASTING
Chabad of Markham holds a scotch tasting and food pairing experience, hosted by **Frank Biskupek**, 8 p.m. RSVP to chabadmarkham.org/scotch.

Tuesday, Feb. 4

TUESDAY STUDY GROUP
Rabbi Samy Bergman is the speaker at a Women of Adath study group breakfast at 9:30 a.m. Non-members, $10 per session. Info: **Marjorie**, 416-780-9156.

TUESDAYS WITH LARRY
Beth Tikvah shows the film *On the Way Out: The Secret Life of Nani and Popi*, 1:30 p.m., $5. Each film includes an introduction and commentary by **Larry Anklewicz**.

Wednesday, Feb. 5

JEWISH SPIRITUALITY SEMINAR
Rabbi Michael Skobac discusses "Shabbat and Holidays: Creating Islands in Time," 7:30 p.m., Village Shul. Free. RSVP: 416-789-0020, or carol@jewsforjudaism.org.

DANGEROUS IDEAS
Rabbi Louis Sachs discusses "Dangerous Ideas and Rabbinic Censorship," Wednesdays until Feb. 19, 7:30 p.m., Beth Tikvah.

Thursday, Feb. 6

SHABBAT SHIRAH CONCERT
Cantor David Guber and **Reuven Grajner** perform a Shabbat Shirah concert, 7 p.m., Beth Emeth. Free.

YIDDISH VINKL
Anna Shternshis discusses "Last Days of Moisei Beregovsky," noon, Free Times Cafe, 320 College St. The talk is in Yiddish. $23, includes lunch. RSVP: yiddishvinkl@yahoo.ca.

Et Cetera

CANCER SUPPORT
Cancer support for Jewish women, including social programs, educational events and resources can be found at the L'Chaim Cancer Support Group for Jewish Women. Info: 416-630-0203, or lchaim@ncjwctoronto.org.

SCHOLARSHIPS
Beth Tzedec Men's Club offers scholarships to students pursuing programs of higher Jewish education. Applicants do not need to be a member of Beth Tzedec. Details: 416-781-3511, or hershr@rogers.com.

CAREGIVING STUDY
Baycrest is looking at the experiences of men 80 and older who are caring for a wife with dementia. Participation involves two to three interviews, in person or on the phone. Contact **Ifah**, 416-946-3724, or iarbel@research.baycrest.org.

BRAIN AGING PROJECT
Baycrest is looking for adults aged 60-85 who are noticing changes to their memory and/or thinking skills, for a study. Must be available for three testing sessions at Baycrest and 10 weekly training sessions at local community centres. Call **Yael**, 416-785-2500 ext. 3377.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED
Baycrest is looking for volunteers, contact 416-785-2500 ext. 2572, or volunteer@baycrest.org.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

❱ Beit Halochem, Aid to Disabled Veterans of Israel is seeking hosts to welcome veterans into their homes this spring. Details: 905-695-0611, or beithalochem.ca.

For Seniors

❱ **Bernard Betel Centre**, 416-225-2112. Feb. 4, **Myriam Shechter** discusses "Great Composers Writing Comedy: Verdi," 10 a.m., $4.25/$8.50; Feb. 5, lecture and documentary on "What is Happiness?" 1:30 p.m., free; Feb. 6, wellness lecture on "Assistive Devices," 1:30 p.m., free.
❱ **Holy Blossom, Rabbi Bill Tepper** discusses "The Experience of Deaf Jews During the Holocaust," Feb. 3. Program includes exercise and lunch. 10 a.m - 1 p.m., $3/$5
❱ **Earl Bales Seniors Club 65+ In the Park.** The club has reopened after renovations, featuring social and partners bridge, gentle exercise and meditation, knitting circles and more. Contact **Valerie**, 416-395-7881.

Prosserman JCC

Donald Gales Family Pavilion on the Sherman Campus, 4588 Bathurst St., 416-638-1881 ext. 4020; prossermanjcc.com.

❱ **Shlomo Schwartzberg** discusses "Movies From Outside North America," four weeks, Wednesdays until Feb. 5, 1-4 p.m.
❱ Shalom Singers Choir, a non-auditioned choir that performs in the community, meets Mondays at 2 p.m.; supervised mah-jong meets Wednesdays at 1 p.m.; drop-in duplicate bridge, Thursdays at 12:30 p.m.
❱ Ongoing programs include Israeli folk dancing, choir, Yiddish conversation and more.

Miles Nadal JCC

750 Spadina Ave., 416-924-6211, mnjcc.org.

❱ Tu b'Shevat Groove: Crafts, songs and games for kids up to 10 years old and adults, Feb. 2, 2:30-4:30 p.m., Artscape Wychwood Barns, 601 Christie St. Register via eventbrite.ca. Free.
❱ Jewish&'s Tu b'Shevat Crafternoon, Feb. 8, 3-5 p.m., for children 3-10 and adults. Register via eventbrite.ca. $5.
❱ Valentine's jazz concert featuring the Ault Sisters, Feb. 13, 1 p.m., followed by reception at 2:30 p.m. $12.
❱ MNJCC Sing-along, Feb. 12, 1 p.m. No conductor, no sheet music, no pressure. Ext. 250. $8.
❱ Strength of Self, alternating Mondays, 11 a.m. A program for women who have experienced abuse. Call ext. 147.
❱ Shabbat Song Circle, Fridays at 10:30 a.m., for children up to age 4 with an adult. Ext. 390.
❱ The New Hollywood of the '60s and '70s with film critic **Adam Nayman**, Mondays until Feb. 10, 1:30 p.m. Register: ext. 155
❱ *Storefront Stories*, archival photos presented by the Ontario Jewish Archives, Blankenstein Family Heritage Centre, in the Gallery at the J until Feb. 3; *When I Walk Among Trees*, photos by **Theresa Bryson** on the third floor until March 1.
❱ **Seniors Arts and Culture**, ext. 155, lisar@mnjcc.org. Meet the artist event: *The House of Martin Guerre* (in concert), featuring members of Toronto Musical Concerts, Jan. 30, 1 p.m. $5.
❱ **Seniors Fitness**, ext. 521. Start Here, a free community wellness integration program designed to provide peer support, community engagement and learning and recovery opportunities. Agency referral required. Call ext. 574.
❱ Michael Bernstein Chapel holds services Thursdays at 7:15 a.m. and Sundays at 8 a.m. Info: **Coleman**, 416-968-0200.

Schwartz/Reisman Centre

Joseph and Wolf Lebovic JCC, 9600 Bathurst St., 905-303-1821. Contact **Andrea** for info: andrea@srcentre.ca, or ext. 3006.

❱ Celebrate Tu b'Shevat with **Yael** and **Ravid** and JNF, with crafts, games and more, Feb. 10, 5-7 p.m.
❱ Programs for people with Parkinson's: boxing classes, contact yorkregion@rsbaffiliate.com; cycling program, Thursdays at 1:30 p.m., contact stephen@srcentre.ca; mindfulness, contact melissa@theyogapath.ca.
❱ Drop-in duplicate bridge, Tuesdays at 6:45 p.m.
❱ Recreational programs for children, teens and young adults with autism spectrum disorder, contact karina@srcentre.ca, or ext. 3042.

Jewish Family & Child

Groups are open to all members of the community. A sliding scale is offered for those who need fee reductions. Registration required. Call **Shawna Sidney**, 416-638-7800 ext. 6215, or jfandcs.com/groups.

❱ Skills for Empowered Living for Women: A six-session wellness group for women. Starts Feb. 3, 7-9 p.m., 9600 Bathurst St. (Lebovic Community Centre).
❱ Mind Body Connection for Women-Part 2: A six-session series that builds on the practice of mindfulness for those who have taken Part 1. Starts Feb. 4, 7-8:30 p.m., 4600 Bathurst St., Lipa Green Centre.
❱ Mind Body Connection for Women-Part 1: A six-session group for women who want to learn mindfulness and meditation. Starts Feb. 6, 1:30-3 p.m. or 7-8:30 p.m., 4600 Bathurst St.
❱ Effective Parenting: A four-session group for parents of children aged two to 10 years. Topics include: how to nurture self-esteem, encourage problem-solving, increase communication and set appropriate limits. Starts Feb. 12, 7-9 p.m., 4600 Bathurst St.
❱ The Jewish Rainbow Alliance: A monthly peer support group for parents, family members and allies of LGBTQ individuals. Feb. 12, 7-9 p.m., 4600 Bathurst St. Pre-registration required
❱ Living With Teens: A six-session group for parents of teens. Topics include setting appropriate limits, learning to let go, parents' rights and responsibilities, the pressures of drugs, alcohol, dating and sexuality. Starts Feb. 24, 7:30-9 p.m., 9600 Bathurst St.
❱ Parenting the Child/Teen With ADHD: A four-week group for parents with children/teens diagnosed with ADHD Starts Feb. 25, 7-9 p.m., 9600 Bathurst St.
❱ The Challenge of Anger for Women: A six-session group for women wanting to learn how to express their anger in an assertive, non-aggressive way. Starts Feb. 25, 7:30-9 p.m., 4600 Bathurst St. ■

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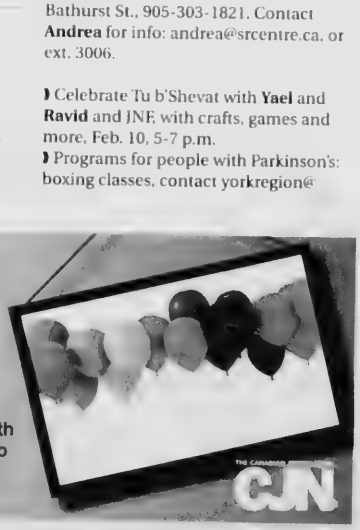

AUTHORS & POETS

THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
CJN

Annual Passover Literary Supplement

We invite readers to submit unpublished, original short stories or poetry that explore Jewish themes.

They should not exceed 2,000 words. Selected submissions will appear in the Passover Supplement of The CJN on April 2, 2020. Not all submissions can be published, and not all those selected will appear in both Toronto and Montreal editions. We look for originality. Please don't send more than three entries.

We cannot correspond with contributors.

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Terry Jones and Otto, the Nazi Jew

Terry Jones frequently was cast to play female characters in Monty Python skits. Here he plays the mother of Brian Cohen (Graham Chapman) in Life of Brian which Jones directed.

JTA
NEW YORK

Terry Jones, a member of the Monty Python comedy troupe, died Jan. 22 at 77. He had been suffering from dementia.

In addition to starring in numerous Python productions, the beloved comedian directed the group's biggest films, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail, The Meaning of Life* and *Life of Brian.*

The last of these tells the story of a Jewish man named Brian Cohen, who is born on the same day and place as Jesus Christ and subsequently mistaken for him. At the time of its release in 1979, the film angered Christian groups around the world for making light of the Jesus story, but it was a huge box office success. *Life of Brian* has since been recognized as one of the funniest movies of all time.

Part of the film involves a group of Jewish revolutionaries, the People's Front of Judea (not to be confused with the splinter group Judean People's Front, or the unpopular Popular Front) who plot a revolt against their Roman rulers. In 2007, Jones told the U.K. *Telegraph* about a scene that he cut from the script that likely would have angered Jews:

The scene was the "Otto" scene, which features a radical, first-century Jewish revolutionary who has the same dreams as the young Adolf Hitler. Otto sports a toothbrush moustache, and, in case we still haven't got the message, his disciples all wear a symbol that combines the Star of David with a swastika. These are "Nazi Jews."

Jones insists he didn't make the cut to avoid giving offence. "It was a very funny scene," he says, "but it wasn't relevant; it wasn't part of the story. When I took it out, the film just flowed so much better." He regretted having to cut the scene at the time and even more so as time passed. "I think what it addressed is extremely relevant today," he said in 2007, "with what's going on in Israel. Eric [Idle, who wrote the scene] put his finger on something; it was quite prophetic."

The potential character divided the cast. According to the book *Jesus and Brian: Exploring the Historical Jesus and his Times via Monty Python's Life of Brian,"* Terry Gilliam, the American Python member, once said to his Python mates, "Listen, we've alienated the Christians, let's get the Jews now." But Michael Palin had reservations about it, and Idle himself said in *The Pythons: Autobiography* that he was uncomfortable about the character as well, calling it a "pretty savage attack on rabid Zionism."

In the end, Otto didn't make the final cut, so we should all just look on the bright side of life. ■

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Sharon Goldman: Driving the engine of Startup Nation

PAUL LUNGEN
plungen@thecjn.ca

Founded in 1955 and located in Ramat Gan, Israel, Bar Ilan University (BIU) is known for melding research excellence and Jewish studies. Sharon Goldman, the university's vice-president of global resources, works with Bar Ilan's top researchers, academics and administrators to build global projects in support of the "Jewish Startup Nation." She was in Canada recently to meet with supporters

What brings you to Toronto?
I'm here to meet with Harold Heilbut, the CEO of the Canadian Friends of Bar Ilan University, and his team. My job is to figure out how to make our entire team more effective and productive.

My role as vice-president is essentially to strategize, co-ordinate and collaborate with our community, in Israel and around the world.

Canadian Friends of Bar Ilan is one of our really important friends groups around the world. We know there is an enormous amount of potential in Toronto – and Montreal, as well. I wanted to come here and get to know Heilbut and his team and strategize about how to build Bar Ilan into a presence, a philanthropic addition to many people's portfolios here in Canada.

Are you looking for people to donate to Bar Ilan or invest in its role in promoting Startup Nation?
I think philanthropy is an investment. I don't think of philanthropy and investment in radically different ways. If I were to ask you to get involved in supporting what you would call philanthropy – straight up write a cheque to Bar Ilan – the reason you're doing that is because you're investing in the kind of work being produced at Bar Ilan.

So you may not get a financial return on your investment, but you'll get a sense that you are investing in Bar Ilan's mission

How will contributions from Canadian supporters be spent?
One of our major projects at Bar Ilan is called STEM 100. It's about bringing post docs back to Israel. Many, if not most, doctoral students go out of the country. It's encouraged, because it's a small country. People are encouraged to expand their horizons, go learn, go explore, go work with other top-notch scientists around the world

The problem is that too many of them are not coming back to Israel after their post-doctoral work.

America, in particular, is the land of many opportunities. They're given a great lab, wonderful people to work with, a good salary and America is a comfortable place to live.

We need to get our best scientists back, in particular to Bar Ilan's campus. The Canadian friends and the American friends are helping recruit investors to help us woo back our scientists.

The money, per se, is not what will get them. We can't match salaries. They want a great lab and they want doctoral assistants and candidates to work with them. They want students. They want to be able to do their work, so we are looking for investors through STEM 100 to help us build, and continue to strengthen, the Startup Nation, by bringing those scientists back.

What's different about Bar Ilan versus other schools in ensuring Israel remains the Startup Nation?
Bar Ilan has a unique role to play in the landscape of academics in Israel. We are the only university that has a core requirement for the students to take classes

Sharon Goldman

around Judaism, something that imbues our students with the understanding that Israel is not just a startup nation, not just this incredible space for innovation or intellectual advancement, but at its core, it's also about being a Jewish state.

Is Bar Ilan a major source of innovation?
It is. There are a number of spaces where Bar Ilan is excelling. If you want to look at hard numbers, Bar Ilan is rated number 1 in artificial intelligence and cybersecurity. We're very focused on big data and using huge amounts of information. In the medical space, we have one of our researchers who is studying breast cancer. She's using some of the technology being developed at Bar Ilan to identify the different strains of breast cancer, so that treatment can be targeted.

We've created a whole centre for precision medicine.

Is Bar Ilan doing the basic research, but not commercializing it, or is it doing both?
Both. We start with basic research. We also have an arm at Bar Ilan that commercializes and patents some of these things that are being produced.

Until they produce it, we need investment from donors, from partners to help them get to a place and then we are very focused on entrepreneurship and bringing in dollars from other places, whether it's grants from the government or foundations, or it's commercialization and partnerships with corporations that are looking to invest in some of the work that is being done

Can you be more specific about the mechanism by which research ideas become commercial ideas?
There are two different ways. One is called "UnBox." We brought in someone who was very successful in developing and selling a number of technology companies. We brought him in to work with our young researchers and teach them about entrepreneurship.

What he says about entrepreneurship is that you need to understand the market before you develop the product. He has an entire year-long process, where people can apply to get some funding to go to America mostly, but also to Europe, to talk with companies working in the space and to have BIU in the back of their head as they move forward with any of the developments. They're starting to make the connections before they even develop the product.

Then we have a specific group on campus called Birad, whose job is to help our researchers get their material patented and to get it commercialized and help build the connections. ■

This interview has been edited and condensed for style and clarity

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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
JANUARY 30, 2020

Death of many colours

EROL ARAF

During the uneasy interlude between the two calamitous world wars, there gathered in Paris, the City of Light,one of the most spectacular assemblies of immigrant Jewish artists in history. Called the School of Montparnasse, Modigliani, Chagall, Soutine and Pascin were among the brightest stars in this new creative constellation.

Pages and pages of names, colours, and styles pour from Nadine Nieszawer's book *Peintres Juifs à Paris*, listing 151 painters who defied tradition and defined modernism. Many of these names mean little today, but these talented Jews were the avant-garde of a new generation of revolutionary artists who not only broke with the Mosaic injunctions about "graven images" (interpreted by many Orthodox Jews as a prohibition about painting), but also shaped the contours of emerging new styles, such as cubism, orphism, surrealism and dadaism.

Many commentators saw in their diverse works the renaissance of the spirit in the people of Israel, creating a modern and a Jewish plastic art in search of new forms, colours and rhythms. One simply has to spend a few hours at the Palais Garnier admiring the Chagall ceiling blending harmoniously with the neo-baroque interiors to appreciate the magic of the esthetics of the confluence of opposites.

They had little in common: Modigliani's portraits were poised and modelled; Pascin's works were fluid and ephemeral; Soutine's art was flamboyant yet fragile; and Chagall dwelled nostalgically in the past where his creations were in limbo and otherworldly. What they all had in common was their existential pessimism.

Soutine's works looked like an outpouring of blood engendering a vision that was "singularly intense, tragic and painful," according to art critic Waldemar George. Chagall whose scenes of pogroms in his *White Crucifixion* where Jesus on the cross was shrouded in the Jewish prayer shawl and surrounded with terrified Jewish figures flying around him, revealed the power of the chains of remembrance (even in his putatively joyous paintings, a melancholic mood prevails). Pascin, who thematically captured the very essence of Schubert's quartet *Death and the Maiden*, in his inwardly dead nudes bearing enigmatic traces of wounded souls painted with the unbearable ambiguity of tone deliberating on the futility of life (he eventually committed suicide).

And Modigliani's penchant for the seedier side of life, for the decadent, the depressed, the failed and the suffering, appeared to have roots in his existential nihilism finding expression in self-destruction in a cauldron of drugs and alcohol. His young wife, pregnant with his child, committed suicide as a symbolic epitaph for the painter who loved death more than life.

Death was their constant companion, shadowing their mental and emotional landscapes like a premonition of misfortunes yet to assail their lives. Indeed, what fate had in store for them was hinted when Camille Mauclair, respected *Figaro* journalist, in his book *The Métèques Against French Art* ("*Métèques*" meaning "filthy foreigner") foresaw, as a prelude to calamity, that the day would come when these "dirty Jews" would be expelled from the soil of France. Alas, their stars shone all too brightly, very briefly, in a world on the verge of being swept away by the German behemoth with its furious metallic lash.

Names roll from long lists of gifted artists who disappeared together with their works: Emmanuel Mané-Katz, Adolphe Féder, Yitzhak Frenkel, Moïse Kisling, Maxa Nordau, Abraham Berlin, Otto Freundlich, Nathalie Kramer and Shimshon Holzman. In his introduction to Nieszawer's book, the late Claude Lanzmann shared an anthology of death: Jean Adler, deported March, 1942, Convoy No 1, assassinated in Auschwitz; Bernard Altschuler, deported March 27, 1944, Convoy No 70, assassinated in Auschwitz, all his works have disappeared; Georges Ascher, Convoy No 60, assassinated in Auschwitz, all his paintings and sketches were destroyed in his workshop the day he was arrested.

Hitler's hatred for "degenerate art" found its final expression in the death of so many talented artists. These are the dead known unto nobody nowadays. What remains of them is a sense of vague regret turning with every passing year into the ephemeral dust of oblivion. To render their surviving art immortal is the debt the living owe to the dead. ■

Erol Araf lives in Montreal.

Ask Ella

It doesn't have to be high and goodbye

Ella Burakowski
eb@thecjn.ca

Dear Ella,

I wanted to bury myself in my bed, never to be seen again, after my dreadful experience at a New Year's Eve party. I can't stop thinking about it.

I had no plans, so my friend invited me to join her, her boyfriend and her boyfriend's brother at a party. Not wanting to stay home, I was very happy to tag along. Jarred, the brother, and I hit it off from the start. I had a few drinks, we laughed, talked and enjoyed the music. Then Jarred and some others went outside for a "walk" and he invited me to come along. I went, as I thought it might be romantic. Once outside, they lit a joint and passed it around.

I had never smoked marijuana before and didn't want to stand out, so I took a hit. I've never been a smoker and started coughing my lungs out, but others were coughing, too, and no one was staring at me. I had heard that people don't get high the first time they smoke and wasn't too concerned about being stoned. In fact, I've always been curious. When it came back around to me, I did it again, taking four hits in total. I did get high, very high – and immediately. Then the paranoia set in and I couldn't stop coughing.

I won't go into more details, but suffice it to say, I made a complete and total ass of myself. Jarred was sweet and never left my side. He took me to a quieter place and talked to me gently, reassuring me that I was OK. He tried to get me to go with the flow, rather than fight it.

I was exhausted by the end of the night. He got an Uber and took me home. He made sure I was safe and kept asking me if I was OK before I got out of the car.

First thing the next morning, he sent me a text to see how I was and wanted to get together. I made an excuse and told him I already had plans. I was so embarrassed, I couldn't face him. He has been texting me ever since to get together, but I just can't face him. I really like him though. I don't know what to do.

High and Goodbye

Dear High and Goodbye,

It looks like "Happy New Year" took on a whole different meaning for you.

What I'd like to address before figuring out if you should see Jarred again, is why you allowed yourself to feel compelled to fit in. Instead of being honest and saying, "No thank you, I've never smoked before," you were so concerned you would not fit in, or be perceived as an outsider or uncool, you chose to go along to get along.

This way of thinking can be very dangerous and you should spend some significant time examining why you allowed yourself to give into this self-imposed pressure. Everyone has the right to say no. Say it confidently, concisely and clearly and no one will give it a second thought. Set healthy boundaries for yourself.

Cannabis is a mind-altering, psychoactive drug and although some people do not get high their first time, as you discovered, many do. Let's not forget you also consumed alcohol before smoking.

Now that pot is legal in Canada, it is all around us – in the news, in storefronts, on lots of websites, on the streets. It's become part of the national dialogue and our culture. It may seem like nothing, but it's still a drug and needs to be respected as one.

Smoking weed for the first time should be done in a comfortable, familiar place, with people you know and trust. It should not have be done with strangers in a strange place. Enough said, on to Jarred.

You got lucky with this guy. He sounds like he was a gentleman and took control of the situation to make sure you were safe and as comfortable as possible. Jarred is exactly the kind of guy you should explore further. He's already proven to be compassionate, caring and responsible.

If you were able to take a chance smoking a joint in a group of strangers, after having a few drinks, go out on a limb and take a chance with Jarred.

Go out with him when you're sober and get to know him. He's already shown you that he can handle a bad situation. Imagine how great he might be if you were just enjoying yourselves. The year may have started out with a bang, but it was a learning experience on many levels. ■

Ella is the author of Hidden Gold - A True Story of the Holocaust. *Her advice is not a replacement for medical, legal or any other advice. For serious problems, consult a professional.*

OBITUARIES AND RELATED NOTICES

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Susan Freedman	Jan 15/20	3636 Bathurst Street
Sam Fischer	Jan 16/20	3560 Bathurst Street
Sy Caine	Jan 16/20	343 Clark Ave. West
Rosalind Wingust	Jan 17/20	10 Kenneth Avenue
Barbara Helper	Jan 15/20	38 Bernard Avenue
Michael Stein	Jan 19/20	2 St. Thomas Street
Isabel (Beattie) Kert	Jan 16/20	33 Lakeview Avenue
Michael Boxer	Jan 15/20	2387 Industrial Street
William D. Moull	Jan 19/20	8 Strathearn Blvd.
Harvey Jacobs	Jan 20/20	2100 Bloor Street West
Eve Rubenstein	Jan 21/20	2600 Bathurst Street
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DAVIS, Harold Wolfe ז"ל

Harold Davis ז"ל, age 93, passed away in Toronto on Saturday, January 18 surrounded by family. He is pre-deceased by his wife of 72 years, Evelyn Moraff Davis. They resided in Sydney, Cape Breton most of their lives and moved to Toronto in 2013.

Harold is survived by daughters Lynne Davis (Cameron Brown), Beverley Davis (Patrick Taylor), grandchildren Shira Taylor (Paul) and David Taylor (Kim) and great grandson Jackson.

Funeral service took place on Tuesday, January 21 with interment at Pardes Chaim Cemetery, Community Section.

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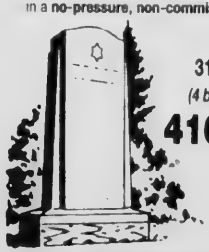

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Mideast peace, the Trump way

The world reacts to the 'deal of the century.'
PAGES 6, 12, 21-24

Teaching the Shoah, 75 years later

Why Holocaust education in Canada needs a reboot. PAGE 7
PLUS: Shoah heroes. PAGES 15-16

The librarians of Jewish life

OPINION: One institution's cost-cutting measures put Yiddish studies at risk. PAGE 11

How to fight anti-Semitism

Q&A: Bari Weiss lays out a plan to battle Jew hatred in America and beyond. PAGE 37

A RADICAL ENDEAVOUR

Muslim Canadian leaders are battling extremism in their own communities. PAGE 8

CANDLELIGHTING, HAVDALAH TIMES

Halifax	5:12 p.m.	6:18 p.m.
Montreal	4:51 p.m.	5:57 p.m.
Ottawa	4:59 p.m.	6:05 p.m.
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Quotable

"[illegible]"

— The words on the shirt worn by a student announcing the kick-off of "Multicultural Week" at Toronto's York University.

Inside today's edition

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COVER ILLUSTRATION BY SARAH LAZAROVIC

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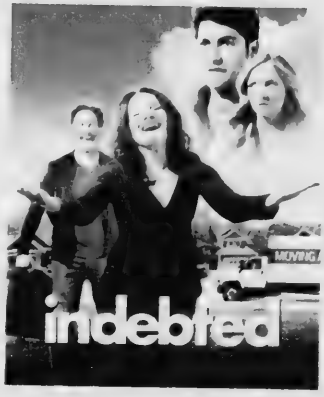
Trending

Two kinds of guys for Fran

Fran Drescher returns to network TV with *Indebted*, a Thursday night sitcom on NBC (Global in Canada), in which she and Steven Weber are a cash-strapped baby boomer couple who end up moving in with their son and his wife. The overtly Jewish elements are a natural fit for the former star of *The Nanny*, her 1990s series being made into a Broadway musical. Drescher created that show with ex-husband Peter Marc Jacobson, who later came out as gay. While she explained that he still "fulfils a lot of needs," Drescher assured reporters that she has "someone on the side who is a friend with benefits."

What comes after trashing Kobe

Ari Shaffir, whose stand-up comedy set *Jew* is scheduled to be a Netflix special, was among those who used the Jan. 26 death of Kobe Bryant as occasion to mention that the NBA legend was charged with sexual assault in 2003. "Big ups to the hero who forgot to gas up his chopper," tweeted Shaffir, adding that Bryant "got away with rape" because of Hollywood liberals who root for the Lakers.



The backlash led the comic to clarify that he typically posts "some horrible s--t" about celebrities after they die. Shaffir still lost a club gig in New York as a result and was dropped by his talent agency.

When there's not a keg to stand on

WeCrashed is a new six-part podcast about the rise and fall of WeWork, which Israeli-American businessman Adam Neumann drove to a US$47 billion valuation before being pushed out as its CEO last September, then walking away with US$1.7 billion. The series includes exclusive tape and interviews to trace Neumann's ascent before the colossal crash: he's now moved with his family from New York to the Neve Tzedek neighbourhood in Tel Aviv while nurturing a new mortgage startup, Peach Street. As for the co-working spaces he left behind, WeWork has turned off its free beer taps. ■

Compiled by Marc Weisblott of CJN Today, our email newsletter. CJNews.com/today.

Gematria

69

The number of years that the B'nai Brith Sports Celebrity Dinner was held in Hamilton, Ont.; its likely final edition ever was held on Jan. 23.

2.96 mm

The size of what Switzerland's mint says is the smallest gold coin in the world, which features the image of Albert Einstein sticking out his tongue.

12

The number of nominations that Roman Polanski's film on the Dreyfus affair, *An Officer and a Spy*, received at France's movie awards, the Césars.

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Letters to the Editor

Remembering Auschwitz

In an age of instantaneous communication of which the generation of Holocaust survivors honoured this week (Jan. 27) could never have even imagined, my wonderful daughter-in-law kept me updated, with photos and video, of the unfolding of the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau commemoration in real time. She had agreed to accompany her grandmother on this poignant and remarkable journey, privileged to live this historic event and to witness the tangible evidence of the rebirth and renewal of a people.

The photographs revealed a large, elegant hall set up with numerous tables and chairs, set with fine china, and displaying a detailed menu assuring all diners that the food was kosher, prepared under rabbinic supervision. The video showed the group, survivors and their family members, joined by a choir of children from the new Jewish day schools in Eastern Europe, singing "Hatikvah" together. And all of this in Krakow, Poland, a stone's throw from the site of the Auschwitz death camp, where these very survivors suffered and starved; where their ultimate death was the goal of all who staffed the camp.

As someone whose grandparents, whom I never met, perished in Auschwitz, who spent a career teaching young students about the Holocaust, and teaching students in the Faculty of Education at McGill University how to teach the Holocaust,and as someone who has been involved in Jewish education for many decades, I am deeply moved by the irony of the events that took place this week.

What an answer to evil! What resilience and defiance in the face of extinction. What lessons to learn about faith, about commitment to living, not merely surviving. These survivors, matriarchs and patriarchs of large extended families, responded to history, stared down the face of evil, and have such profound lessons for us as we confront a sometimes frightening world.

I am eager to hear the reactions of this courageous group to this experience. For many, this is the first time they have returned and confronted this terrain since their liberation. Others have already been, and have had the strength to make this journey more than once. What does this return to a bitter past tell them? Inform us? Teach to the world that has forgotten the many lessons of history.

How have we all been enriched by their courage and fortitude? And what is our responsibility to them, as we, their fortunate descendants, thrive on the heels of their sacrifice.?

Cooki Levy
Toronto

Happy birthday, youngster

Congratulations on *The CJN*'s 60th anniversary. It was as a freelance reporter for *The CJN* in Montreal that I began my career in Jewish community journalism, an opportunity for which I remain thankful.

However, I was taken aback to read that *The CJN* was "the first English-language Jewish newspaper in the province of Ontario," (Trending, Dec. 26, 2019). The first issue of the *Ottawa Jewish Bulletin*, the newspaper serving the Jewish community in Canada's capital, was published on Oct. 22, 1937, more than 82 years ago, and has published continuously since. We currently publish 19 issues per year.

Michael Regenstreif, editor,
Ottawa Jewish Bulletin
Ottawa

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Rabbi2Rabbi

What does it mean to be inclusive?

As we mark Jewish Disability Awareness and Inclusion Month we need to confront how our shuls acknowledge disability

RABBI N. DANIEL KOROBKIN
BETH AVRAHAM YOSEPH CONGREGATION, TORONTO

RABBI LISA GRUSHCOW
TEMPLE EMANU-EL-BETH SHOLOM, MONTREAL

The Tamir Neshama Choir in Ottawa is comprised of individuals with disabilities and performs often in the city.

Rabbi Grushcow: February is Jewish Disability Awareness and Inclusion Month, which we have been marking at Temple for six years. It's been incredibly heartening to see more and more synagogues and federations take part in this effort - this year, our focus will be on the role of caregivers, and what it means to give and take care. It is also clear that we all still have a long way to go.

At its best, this kind of effort pushes us to challenge what we mean by inclusion. As Pamela Schuller, a dynamic comedian and Jewish educator who has Tourette syndrome, says, "our communities should be celebrating each person and what they bring to the community, not just what they demand of it." In other words, as the title of one of her articles insists, "I'm not your mitzvah project."

Inclusion doesn't mean doing people a favour. It means valuing what everyone brings. I was reflecting on this as we re-encountered the story of Moses. Moses repeatedly refers to his difficulty speaking - he says his lips and tongue are heavy. Generations of commentators have interpreted this as a speech impediment or stutter. Using Pamela Schuller's lens, perhaps it is precisely because of this challenge that he became such a powerful spokesperson for our people.

Rabbi Korobkin: It's been challenging to navigate how our institutions acknowledge our disabled members. Up until a couple of years ago, our shul participated, along with other Toronto congregations, in a designated "Shabbat of Inclusion" where we could highlight those with disabilities. Yachad, the Orthodox Union's division for servicing disabled youth, as well as local institutions DANI and Reena participated. We gave honours and prominence to our members and guests with disabilities.

But more recently, it was brought to our attention that in the eyes of some, designating a specific Shabbat for inclusion implied that other Shabbaton were not for inclusion. Similarly, others have suggested that putting forth the disabled for honours is, in some way, using them as "props" for the abled among us.

In an idyllic world, we shouldn't view a person in a wheelchair as disabled. But we don't live in an idyllic world. If we highlight those with special needs for one period of time, maybe we're doing a disservice to the disabled. And yet, if we don't highlight them, are we not doing a greater disservice?

Rabbi Grushcow: In terms of ability and disability, I think there really is no "us" and "them." One's reality can change in the blink of an eye. The same ramp which is helpful to someone in a wheelchair is also important for a young parent with a stroller or a senior with a walker.

Our focus this year on caregiving expands the circle still further. Our committee's work has been guided by this quote from Rosalyn Carter: "There are only four kinds of people in the world. Those who have been caregivers. Those who are currently caregivers. Those who will be caregivers. And those who will need a caregiver."

Just as our tradition teaches us that at different times the same person may need tzedakah and give tzedakah, so too with care. When we realize this, we end up more mindful of the importance of treating everyone with dignity, and valuing everyone's contribution.

Rabbi Korobkin: So true. The Talmudic sages refer to life as a *galgal ha-chozer*, or, in the words of the Christian philosopher Boethius, a "Wheel of Fortune." Our lives are constantly rotating and transforming from advantage to disadvantage, back to advantage and so on.

The greatest beneficiaries of inclusion are not the disabled, but rather the rest of the community whose lives are enriched by the ability to share communal experiences without exclusion. I see the children and young adults who volunteer for the special needs care organizations - it's so clear how much they grow and mature from the experience. That's why I tell parents that the greatest gift they can give to their children is encouraging them to get involved.

Just as Moses was tested through seeing how he would treat those less privileged, if you want to find the future leaders of the Jewish world, look to these volunteers. They are acquiring the empathy and love that we need to lead the next generation. ■

Every winter, we like to go down south. Who needs the cold at our age? Last year, we signed up for the Benjamin's Funeral Service Listings email. It gives us peace of mind to know that if someone in our community dies, we won't miss the chance to send our condolences. Benjamin's updates us every day – a free service that helps us stay in touch.

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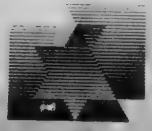

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Deal of the century? Not quite

It felt as though it took just a day or two, after U.S. President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu introduced it together in Washington, D.C., for the "Deal of the century" peace initiative to fall out of the headlines.

Last week, it seemed, most people – and media pundits – were too busy obsessing over Trump's impeachment trial and the culmination of Brexit, or worrying about the spread of the coronavirus, to spend too much time considering peace in the Middle East. Heck, outside Israel barely anyone even mentioned the corruption charges now officially facing Netanyahu, a first for a sitting Israeli prime minister.

Predictably, many people dismissed the Trump proposal out of hand. On the left, the deal was rejected as wholly one-sided for not having any buy-in from the Palestinians, as well as over the proposed annexations of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Jordan Valley. (For some on that end of the political spectrum, though, the deal might very well have gone as far as any previous Israeli offer and still been considered dead on arrival, simply because of the two men who presented it.) Meanwhile on the Israeli right, the mere mention of a future Palestinian state, along with the settlement freeze that the deal would purportedly set in place, were seen as major deal-breakers.

Even American and Israeli leaders didn't appear to be completely on the same page: after the plan was introduced, Netanyahu hinted that settlement annexation could come rapidly, only for its American progenitor, Jared Kushner, to signal it might not actually happen until after the Israeli elections.

Beyond the ranks of the U.S. Republican party and the two Israeli parties vying to lead the next Knesset, Likud and Blue and White, you would have been hard-pressed to find much full-throated support for the Trump deal. (The much vaunted, other critical source of approval, from Arab nations like the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Oman, which sent envoys to witness the unveiling of the plan, along with U.S. allies Saudi Arabia and Egypt, took a step back over the weekend after the Arab League, spurred

> *The departure from previous peace plan presentations couldn't have been starker.*

by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, who announced plans to cut ties with U.S. and Israel, rejected the deal.) Even some mainstream Jewish groups, including here in Canada, reacted with degrees of caution, pledging themselves to "study the plan" and urging "all parties" to come to the negotiating table.

The departure from previous peace plan presentations couldn't have been starker. We clearly remember the images of Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat joining Bill Clinton on the White House lawn. Arafat and Clinton again, this time with Ehud Barak, at Camp David, the Taba summit, the Roadmap for Peace. All of those efforts were met with enthusiasm and encouragement from across the globe. Once you'd have expected wall to-wall coverage of anything to do with Israeli-Palestinian peace, but this time it was much closer to bubkes.

Sure, there are plenty of reasons to be skeptical about the Trump deal. But then there have been plenty of reasons to be skeptical of previous peace efforts, too and indeed, in the end, despite all the apparent international optimism, much of the security concerns on the Israeli side were borne out during the resulting Palestinian intifadas. Optimism hasn't produced peace.

For any deal to work, both sides will ultimately need to come to the negotiating table. But in the meantime, there's no point sugar-coating the situation. Maybe a healthy dose of skepticism is exactly what the Israeli-Palestinian conflict needs. A photo op was never going to solve this problem anyway. ■ — YONI

From the Archives
Meeting Trudeau

ONTARIO JEWISH ARCHIVES, BLANKENSTEIN FAMILY HERITAGE CENTRE, UJA FEDERATION OF GREATER TORONTO

Children gather to greet Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, the guest of honour at a UJA event at Beth Tzedec Congregation in Toronto, on June 5, 1978.

Photograph by Graphic Artists

SeeJN
Happy ending

MEIR VAKNIN/FLASH90 PHOTO

Naama Issachar, 27, the Israeli-American woman who was jailed in Russia on drug charges, arrives at her home in Rehovot, Jan. 30, after receiving a pardon from Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Essay

Holocaust must be taught as an independent event

Jody Spiegel

SHUTTERSTOCK PHOTO

In September 2018, the Azrieli Foundation, in partnership with the Claims Conference, commissioned a comprehensive study of Canadian knowledge and awareness of the Holocaust. The results, published in January of 2019, were alarming: Canadians did not know the complexity and scale of the Holocaust. In fact, 15 per cent of Canadian adults were unaware of or not sure if they had heard of the Holocaust.

In the last year, has awareness increased due to the recent rise in anti-Semitic incidents in Canada and abroad? Does the pattern of targeting Jews in hate crimes create discussions about the Holocaust in the public sphere?

The survey showed that more than a quarter of millennials and Gen-Z (aged 18-34) believed that less than two million Jews were killed during the Holocaust. It also showed that a majority of Canadians are aware of the Holocaust while a majority (54 per cent) of Canadians don't know how many Jews were killed, indicating a significant gap between knowledge and awareness. This is one of the challenges of Holocaust education: Many Canadians don't know the details of the Holocaust, the specifics of its history.

In classrooms and in the public discourse, the Holocaust has become an atrocity that is discussed in generalities – Canadians learn about what happens when hate is given power, when democracy is at risk, when citizens don't speak up. These are important lessons, but extensive focus on them has blurred the details of what actually happened, created somewhat of a nebulous space in which the Holocaust can act as a stand-in or an analogy to a wide variety of general societal problems.

The Holocaust must be understood and taught as an independent historical event – one with political, geographical and sociological contexts. When we only discuss the Holocaust through the lessons that it can teach us, we obscure the Holocaust as an event, turning it into a metaphor.

For example, 76 per cent of Canadians demonstrated familiarity with Anne Frank, who in many ways represents the victim of the atrocity. However, only 23 per cent identified the Netherlands – where Anne Frank lived in hiding – as somewhere the Holocaust took place. Anne Frank as an eternal optimist and tragic story is well known; Anne Frank in her historic specificity is not. For many Canadians, knowledge of the Holocaust can be summarized as such: It was a terrible atrocity that took place in Germany (only 43 per cent said the Holocaust occurred in Poland); we won't let it happen again (48 per cent said it could happen in Western democracies); and it definitely won't happen in Canada (27 per cent).

This version of history is missing important details. One important detail that is left out: Canada's "none is too many" immigration policy for Jews, which only 19 per cent of Canadians knew about, while 32 per cent believed Canada had an open door policy. We fail to understand that our government chose to close the borders and let those trying to escape a genocide be turned away.

There is a desire among Canadians for more knowledge. A substantial majority believe that all students should learn about the Holocaust so that it doesn't happen again. A majority of young people think that Holocaust education could be substantially better. I agree. But what is our next step after we stand by a survivor and nod while they say never again and charge us to never forget?

The survey proved that we as a society have much more work to do. The rise of anti-Semitism is pointing to the need for even greater education. And there is hope. Holocaust survivors are still here. Those who can speak to school groups are forging ahead, telling their stories.

Leaders in Holocaust education are still striving to teach, working to ensure that what happened to six million Jews is understood and remembered.

Our exceptional partners across the country are providing phenomenal ways to keep empowering teachers who take the time to make this happen – from the larger Holocaust centres in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal to smaller organizations in Winnipeg, Calgary and Halifax and from Facing History and Ourselves to Yad Vashem.

We have found that the more we do, the more interest there is. We have increased our efforts over the past year to provide educators from across Canada with the free resources they need to teach a detailed history of the Holocaust while keeping it personal and engaging. For instance, just this month, every single Grade 10 student in the Toronto District School Board received a copy of Pinchas Gutter's memoir, *Memories in Focus*, and we've created a Facebook page for teachers to discuss the challenges they face bringing the topic into the classroom.

This year marks 75 years since the end of the war. Diplomats and survivors recently gathered at Yad Vashem, Auschwitz-Birkenau and other events around the globe to pledge to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive. We will continue to work with educators and our partners across the country to help make space to learn about what happened to six million Jews. We must all continue to make connections and keep this historical event relevant, creating a critical bridge between history and empathy. ■

Jody Spiegel is the director of the Holocaust Survivor Memoirs Program at the Azrieli Foundation and is a member of the Canadian delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA).

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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
FEBRUARY 6, 2020

Stemming the tide of extremism

The grassroots deradicalization efforts within Canada's Muslim communities

STEVEN ZHOU
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Around 100 people have left Canada over the past four years to join terrorist groups in Iraq and Syria. Many are set to return to this country and the debate over what to do with them has become a national issue.

Deradicalization – the reverse engineering of an individual's descent into violent extremism – has thus become particularly relevant to national security officials.

Thirty-three Canadians, including 18 children, are currently being held in northeastern Syria, where they, or their parents, went to fight with ISIS. Ottawa hasn't announced any specifics about how they'll be treated if they return.

This isn't the first time Canada has had to deal with extremism within its own population. Aside from white nationalist and neo-Nazi threats, Canada has dealt with several high-profile cases involving violent Muslim extremists.

In 2014, one man rammed his car into a group of soldiers in Quebec (killing one) and another man shot and killed a soldier on Parliament Hill. More recently, in 2017, a man with an ISIS flag drove a U-Haul truck into a crowd of police and pedestrians during a CFL game in Edmonton, where the Canadian military was being honoured.

Deradicalization became a hot topic in Canada in 2006, when 18 individuals were charged with planning to carry out a string of terrorist attacks across southern Ontario. Eleven of the so-called Toronto 18 pleaded guilty, or were convicted in court.

In the wake of these incidents, many spoke out against the habit of conflating Islam with terrorism. Experts have long debated how and why individuals decide to commit such violence, as well as how to prevent or intervene in the radicalization process.

Less recognized are the Muslim leaders who have very quietly been engaging those who have been seduced by perverted versions of Islam that call for mass violence.

"The reason why we have so few numbers of people joining ISIS is that the community and mosques, by spreading mainstream Islam, already do a version of prevention," says Mubin Shaikh, an operative who worked to infiltrate the Toronto 18 for the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) and the RCMP. "A lot of that work simply doesn't get known or heard, because it's being done privately."

SARAH LAZAROVIC ILLUSTRATION

Over the years, around 40,000 foreign fighters from 80 countries have travelled to the Middle East to join ISIS. Around 180 came from Canada. According to George Washington University's Program on Extremism, around 1,900 people from France have joined ISIS, along with 300 or so from Belgium, while 295 people from the United States have either joined, or tried to join.

There are numerous Muslim-Canadian leaders who have been working within their communities to engage those who harbour extremist ideas. Authorities get involved only when it's clear that nothing is working and an act of violence seems imminent.

"You cannot force deradicalization, it has to be part of a natural, organic process," Shaikh says. "This, I think, is the bigger gap that we face: that it's not some switch to flip on or off, or some pill you can eat. It has to be done willingly and naturally."

Ghayda Hassan, a clinical psychologist who currently serves as the co-chair of the federal government's national expert committee on countering radicalization to violence, says that, "For the past few years, there has been an increase in efforts by local communities to address the problem on several levels, such as within schools and youth groups."

But Hassan feels "that in recent years, because there's been so few Muslim radicalization incidents, most of the emphasis has been on stemming the impact of far-right hate crimes, which often targets Muslims... Nonetheless, there are organizations across the country that have created teams that work with individuals in certain communities who are affected by radicalization."

Those teams often include trusted Muslim leaders and counsellors who've earned a substantial level of respect and trust within their local Muslim communities.

One such person is Navaid Aziz, who has been the director of religious and social services for the Islamic Information Society of Calgary since 2012. The organization received quite a bit of attention after it bolstered its youth programs in response to several young Muslim men who left the area to join jihadist organizations in Syria and Iraq in 2014 and 2015.

On his own time, Aziz spends about 10 hours a month dealing with what he says are rare cases of Muslim youth who might be in danger of radicalization. These referrals sometimes come from concerned parents, but they also come from Edmonton's Organization for the Prevention of Violence, which focuses on countering extremism and lists Aziz among its team of expert consultants.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

"That's a very long-term process, so my approach has generally been that I have to create trust between people and that you have to get them to confide in you and to open up and talk about what really happened," Aziz says.

"Measuring success in these programs is very difficult, and everyone has their own metric system.... So for me, I ask: After a period of three years, how is your thought process? What are you doing in your free time? Are you progressing in your life? Are you getting more integrated into society? How comfortable are you with your Muslim identity?"

Aziz emphasizes that just about every person he's counselled this way has used Islam or obscure scriptural interpretations to justify their actions (and the actions of other terrorists).

"No one I know came across Islam for the first time and says that, 'Yeah, Islam made me radical,' " he says. "I have never seen a case like that."

Instead, people often self-radicalize away from the gaze of mainstream community leaders or spaces. A study conducted by CSIS in 2011, which was obtained by the *Globe and Mail* two years later, concluded that extremists aren't generally being radicalized inside mosques.

Navaid Aziz

"In my experience, people who've had social isolation, difficult lives or some frustration with Western foreign policy are looking for a way to express their frustration," Aziz says. "Sometimes – whether they fall into an online community or even an in-person community – they end up in a radicalization process because it's the only way they've found to do that."

Aziz and his colleagues focus on engaging Muslim youth, in order to keep them safe from all vulnerabilities, be it extremism or otherwise. He says that guarding against radicalization then becomes a natural part of that broader, more holistic approach.

Another organization that has explored how to make communities more resilient against extremist ideologies is the Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW). Over the past few years, the group has launched two major projects that tried to strengthen community ties through positive engagement.

> "No one I know came across Islam for the first time and says that, 'Yeah, Islam made me radical.' "

One is Project Communitas, which sought to increase community resilience (in seven Canadian cities) across cultural and religious divides by advocating dialogue and civic engagement. Another is the Common Ground Project, a similar initiative led by, and focused on, youth, intended to promote dialogue between Canadians of different backgrounds. Both projects were funded by the federal government.

"We know that, unfortunately, there's a lot of negative influence online and in social media, and whether it's white supremacists or Muslim extremists, the goal is to perpetuate hate and to misguide people," says Nuzhat Jafri, the executive director of CCMW. "And essentially, a lot of our work has been trying to increase people's capacity to use their words to counter hateful narratives."

She adds that there have been cases where youth, including Muslims, have come out of a particular program with a much healthier and more accepting view of other religions and groups. The programs gave participants the opportunity to engage those from other faiths who have very different backgrounds and experiences. Jafri says that the experience showed young people how social change can happen when like-minded people get together.

This two-pronged approach tackles extremist sentiment that frames other groups as inferior, dangerous or entities to be fought against. It also addresses youth who are frustrated by what they see happening around the world, or within their own communities, and can't figure out what to do about it.

"We want to do something positive in their lives," she says. "The Koran says over and over again we should have the ability to see right from wrong and to redirect them onto the right path – God wouldn't have put us here if He didn't want us to do that." ■

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The anti-Semitism disease is spreading

Michael Diamond

> *We had all better pay very close attention to what is taking place here in Canada.*

Like most of you, I am not an expert on anti-Semitism. Nor have I experienced much anti-Semitism in my life. A few "dirty Jew" taunts in high school is all. My fear of anti-Semitism has arisen through the experiences of others, and not from direct experience.

I feel anguish and fear when a French Jewish woman is raped, thrown over a balcony to her death, or when Orthodox Jews in New York are attacked physically and verbally. I feel it when rampant white supremacist Jew hatred is leveled at our Jewish brethren or when the right of the only Jewish state to exist is questioned, and when the leaders of the very people with whom Israel is supposed to be making peace, the Palestinians, are teaching their children to hate Jews and paying their people to terrorize Jews. I feel it in empathy with the U.K. Jewish community who dodged a bullet in the last election, and with the Jews of France whose safety is in question. I feel it in remembering Pittsburgh and San Diego and New Jersey and too many other not so isolated incidents. I feel it from the anti-fascist (antifa) left, from the right and from the Islamists. I feel it.

Right now these things are happening to "others." But are the conditions here in Toronto and Canada all that different from prior conditions of others who are now in the thick of Jew hatred? Are we next?

It is possible that the unique combination of factors in Canada, including political and corporate leadership, the sensitivity of the media, combined with some form of Canadian uniqueness will spare us from the fate of too many other Jews around the world.

But talking about possibilities and failing to act where the well being of our friends and families are involved is not good enough. People wear seatbelts because of possibilities. We are checked for explosives at the airport because of possibilities. While you might believe that anti-Semitism is unlikely to spread materially here in Canada, you cannot argue that the disease affecting other western countries cannot spread here as it has elsewhere. Even if we think there is a small chance of it happening here, shouldn't we be pulling out all the stops to reduce that possibility?

When Jew-focused hatred, fear and loathing get to a tipping point, they are hard to stop. It becomes a tidal wave of hate, as we have seen not just in Nazi Germany, but in many Christian and Muslim countries over the centuries.

All of which is to say we had all better pay very close attention to what is taking place here in Canada. Incidents of anti-Semitism are growing and the situation isn't getting any better. Anti-Semitism is a societal disease: like cancer, it exists in all western societies and is triggered by societal events. We need to find and understand those triggers, and respond as needed to the changes. We need to fight for ourselves, while also associating with, and ensuring the education of our non-Jewish natural friends in this country – people who, rather than being jealous of perceived Jewish productivity, appreciate us, work with us and enjoy the value we bring to this country.

Some forms of Jew hatred, particularly anti-Zionism, are seen as acceptable because we are seen as being part of a so-called white majority, as "oppressors". But factually speaking, we are victims now as we have been in the past and we do ourselves an injustice if we do not proclaim our equal right to victimhood in an era where victim status carries so much value.

In being vigilant, we need to remember that the thrust of anti-Semitism is based on lies. In the case of decent people, sharing the truth of the matter will be fairly received, without bias and will win the day. Finding the mechanisms to make the case that we Jews are in fact OK, add value, and are not the horned devils that many suggest we are, is a job we need to do well. But simply assuming that "it cannot happen here" is a dangerous assumption to make. ■

Imagining peace in the Middle East

The Yarkon Bridge Trio in 1964. GOVERNMENT PRESS OFFICE COHEN FRITZ PHOTO

David Weinfeld

Donald Trump and Bibi Netanyahu are corrupt, bigoted politicians, and they will not solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Neither, it seems, will Mahmoud Abbas, too old and unpopular. In these moments when peace feels so distant, I let my mind wander towards a broader perspective, an imagined future beyond Israel and Palestine. I think of the larger Middle East, and the peoples who live there, Muslims, Christians, and Jews. This larger framework reminds me of a song my mother used to sing to me when I was a child.

My mom grew up attending Shomria, a socialist Zionist summer camp in northern Ontario. They had quaint, hilarious rituals like "capitalist day," when campers would be required to pay money to enter the cafeteria or go to the bathroom, to demonstrate the evils of capitalism. One thing Shomria encouraged was singing. My mom learned "The Internationale," a left-wing anthem, in English and Hebrew, as well as Italian revolutionary songs like "Avanti Popolo."

The song that resonates most with me, however, is "K'she Yavo Shalom," which is sung to the tune of "When the Saints Go Marching In." The song was first performed in the early 1960s by the Yarkon Bridge Trio, an Israeli folk group consisting of famous Ashkenazic musician Arik Einstein and celebrated Sephardic singer Yehoram Gaon, along with Benny Amdursky.

The Hebrew lyrics, which were written by Polish-born Israeli Haim Hefer, tell of a better time, a fairy tale. Theodor Herzl, the father of modern Zionism, proclaimed that, "If you wish it, it is no fairy tale," which is more commonly translated as, "If you will it, it is no dream." That dream of Middle East peace seems very distant today. Nonetheless, it's worth singing this song to learn the contours of that dream.

The song's title, "K'she Yavo Shalom," translates to "When Peace Comes." That line is repeated, with each stanza offering a different example of what will happen when there is peace. The lyrics imagine a fantastic world in which an Israeli Jew could "take a train to Damascus" or "go skiing in Lebanon." Each stanza offers a new possibility. The singers describe the "sons of Baghdad being healed (at the hot springs) in Tiberias." They anticipate people celebrating and "raising a glass in Cairo and in Haifa."

In some sense, the song is a product of its time. In the early '60s, before the 1967 Six-Day War and the military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, people referred to the Arab-Israeli conflict more than the Israeli-Palestinian one.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

the countries in the region are, basically, interconnected, as are the people who live there.

Jewish Israelis worried more about foreign threats than domestic ones. Israel's political and military establishment focused on neighbouring enemies like Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon, or hostile Arab states like Iraq.

Yet the song hearkens back to earlier ideas of potentially viable Mideast political frameworks. In 1918, American philosopher Horace Kallen, a passionate secular Zionist, desired a "United States of Asia Minor, involving the Jews, Arabs, Armenians, etc., under international or British guarantee." For Kallen, and many other early Zionists, what mattered was Jewish safety, cultural development and a connection to the Land of Israel, coupled with goodwill towards all the people who inhabited the region.

Today, the geopolitical reality is different, but the region remains mired in conflict. Perhaps what is needed is not a United States of Asia Minor, but something closer to the Canadian model. The Middle East is multicultural, with different religions, languages, literature, art, sports, songs, food and philosophies. But the people who create and blend these cultures are indelibly linked through their beautiful, complex histories, their interwoven pasts and presents.

So let's imagine the Middle East at its most utopian, with Jews, Muslims and Christians traveling to Damascus, skiing in Lebanon, bathing in Tiberias and raising glasses in Haifa and Cairo. Let's translate the song into Arabic and add verses in Farsi about Iran. And let's sing all our versions together in harmony. ■

Do you disagree with our columnists? Have your say by writing to **cjninfo@gmail.com.**

There's no YIVO without its librarians

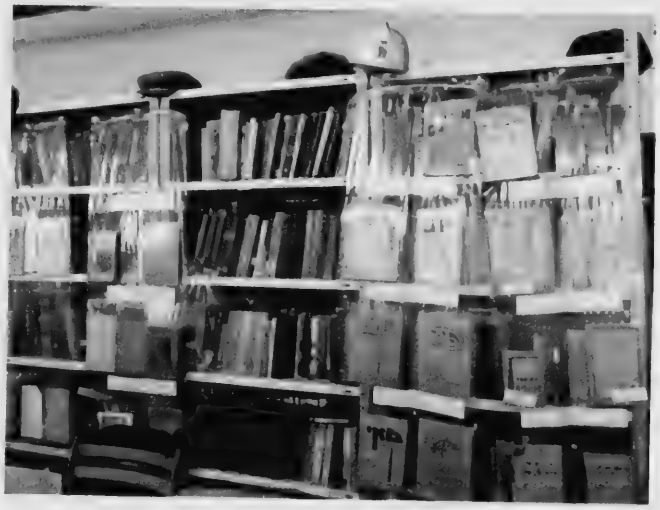
Anna Shternshis

The New York-based YIVO Institute for Jewish Research recently fired its four librarians, citing a budget deficit. YIVO is the world's leading and oldest institution whose sole mission is to "preserve and foster knowledge of the ongoing story of Jewish life, with a focus on the history and culture of east European Jewry."

Immediately after *The Forward* broke the news on Jan. 20, 15 scholars, spearheaded by Yiddish studies graduate students, created a petition calling on YIVO to reverse its decision. Within 36 hours, 1,235 people, including numerous Canadians, signed. It is a list of scholars, artists, activists, students from all over the world, people who cannot imagine their research and academic endeavours without relying on documents that YIVO contains.

YIVO was established in 1925, headquartered in Poland. It started with the group of enthusiasts, many of them emigres from the Russian Empire. Cecile Kuznitz, in her book *YIVO and the Making of Modern Jewish Culture* (2014), explains that unlike many other research institutes, YIVO relied not just on professional scholars, but also on *zamlers*, ordinary men and women who took it upon themselves to preserve what they believed had been the most important documents and books of European Jewish culture in their hometowns. By the end of the 1930s, YIVO had over 30 branches around the world. Its board included such luminaries as Sigmund Freud and Albert Einstein. In 1939, Max Weinreich, the founder of YIVO, was able to escape Europe and the New York-based YIVO's American branch became YIVO's headquarters.

Today, it has a collection containing 23 million archival documents and 385,000 books. Most researchers wouldn't even begin to know where to find these rare publications unless a librarian directs them. Without a librarian, researchers will be tempted to write books based only on easily searchable digitized books and documents. Imagine someone writing a book on the history of medicine among Yiddish speakers, and missing crucial works written in the 19th century simply because their titles do not directly refer to medicine, doctors or nurses. Our imagination is limited, and so is our digital word search. Librarians are trained to study their collections and broaden scholars' range.



SHAUL A HAITNER PIKWIK / ISRAEL PHOTO

The most vulnerable workers of YIVO, but also some of the most valuable ones, were sacrificed.

I am sure it was an impossibly difficult decision for YIVO to lay off four librarians. It does not make YIVO look good that one of them worked there for decades, that three are women, three are over 50 and two are immigrants. One of the librarians is world-renowned specialist Lyudmila Sholokhova, originally from Kiev, where she rescued the Yiddish music collections of the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine.

Why did it happen? YIVO's fundraising goals were not met, and the most vulnerable workers of YIVO, but also some of the most valuable ones, were sacrificed.

It is easy to blame the non-supporting public or donors for not picking up the bill. But one cannot help but wonder why some organizations, such as the Yiddish Book Center in Amherst, which rescued millions of books from ending up in garbage dumps and digitized them and thus transformed scholarship worldwide, manages to stay afloat with spectacular success, whereas YIVO, a place where each document and book been collected with the remarkable heroism of hundreds of people over the past 95 years, continues to suffer budget deficits.

I hope this story has a happy ending. YIVO started when the field of Jewish studies was in its infancy. It survived the war when its collections were looted by the Nazis. Today when Jewish studies are taught widely in North America, more people rely on YIVO to advance our knowledge of history and culture of Jews. Let's hope that 2020 will not be remembered as the year the YIVO fired its librarians, and the field of Yiddish studies began an irreversible decline. ■

Anna Shternshis is the Al and Malka Green professor of Yiddish Studies and director of Anne Tanenbaum Centre for Jewish Studies, University of Toronto. anna.shternshis@utoronto.ca

News

Canadians have mixed reaction to peace deal

PAUL LUNGEN
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The Israeli government loved it, the Palestinian Authority hated it, and Canadian Jews had a mixed reaction to the "Deal of the Century," the Middle East peace plan unveiled by the Trump administration on Jan. 28.

The Canadian government, meanwhile, repeated its longstanding official position, which called on the parties to negotiate a comprehensive peace.

In a statement, Canadian Foreign Minister François-Philippe Champagne said, "Canada remains committed to the goal of achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. This includes the creation of a Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with Israel and ensuring Israel's security within its own borders."

"Canada recognizes the urgent need to renew efforts toward a negotiated solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and will carefully examine the details of the U.S. initiative for the Middle East peace process," he said.

"Canada has long maintained that peace can only be achieved through direct negotiations between the parties. We urge the parties to create the conditions for such negotiations to take place," Champagne added.

The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) welcomed the peace plan.

"All proposals should be scrutinized, negotiated, and modified by the key stakeholders. We encourage all parties to review the details of the plan, come to the negotiating table, and to engage constructively in the discussion to the benefit of Israelis and Palestinians alike."

U.S. President Donald Trump, with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem in May 2017. FLASH90 PHOTO

Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Center said it was examining the Trump plan, which is 181 pages long.

"At stake is the preservation of Israel's security and stability in the long run, with Jerusalem as its eternal capital, while ensuring a free and democratic Palestinian state that is willing to live peacefully alongside the Jewish state," said FSWC president and CEO Avi Benlolo.

FSWC called on all parties to engage in constructive discussions and work toward a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

B'nai Brith Canada said it "supports a two-state solution which paves the way to peace between the Israelis/Palestinians and ends years of conflict. The proposed plan ... is a creative solution balancing the need for an independent, prosperous Palestinian state with a safe and secure Israel."

A much more negative appraisal of the plan was offered by two Jewish organizations on the progressive wing of the political spectrum.

"The plan released on Jan. 28 reduces even further the chance of negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians," JSpaceCanada said in a statement.

"As history has shown us, real peace can only be achieved through mutual agreement," said Karen Mock, president of JSpaceCanada. "Palestinians, like Israelis, deserve a plan that respects their dignity, security and national aspirations. It is our hope that both sides will come to the table to negotiate a real peace, with Jews recognizing the Palestinian right to self-determination, and Palestinians recognizing the right of the Jewish people to a state of their own."

JSpaceCanada went on to note that it "has consistently advocated against the unilateral annexation of West Bank settlements. Such a move would go against international law and the values outlined in Israel's Declaration of Independence. Unilateral annexation endangers Israel's future as a Jewish and democratic state, and has serious implications for the security of Israelis and Palestinians alike."

A similar position was adopted by Canadian Friends of Peace Now (CFPN), which called it the "sham of the century."

CFPN said the plan is "guaranteed to exacerbate rather than resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The plan pays lip-service to a two-state solution, but, at the same time, green lights immediate Israeli annexation of the entire Jordan Valley and the extension of Israeli sovereignty to settlements in the West Bank."

The group characterized the plan with terms such as dangerous, "one-sided" and "double speak."

"Presenting bad plans bears real costs of increasing disillusionment, anger, and distrust between the parties. Imposing a plan unilaterally on the Palestinians in the fashion the plan was announced is not a pro-Israel act. It sells a lie to the Israeli people and furthers Israel from peace," CFPN concludes.

A far different perspective was offered by Chani Aryeh-Bain, the 2019 federal Conservative candidate in Eglinton-Lawrence, a riding in midtown Toronto.

Aryeh-Bain said Canada should support the peace plan. "This plan offers Israel security while it offers the Palestinians their much-coveted statehood with ensuing economic prosperity. It is time for the Palestinian leadership to embark upon building their state and allowing its citizens to join in creating economic prosperity for all," she said.

While she expected the Palestinian leadership to reject it, Aryeh-Bain suggested "the political landscape has changed: Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates have all issued statements welcoming Trump's peace plan. Oman and Bahrain attended the announcement, signaling a warming of relations between their countries and Israel.

"Therefore, I am optimistic that this plan will lead to meaningful negotiations and hopefully, a resolution that both sides can live with.

"At the end of the day there will be concessions, sometimes painful ones, that will have to be made by both sides," she said. ■

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York Aboriginal group apologizes for offensive shirt

ALEX ROSE
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The Aboriginal Students' Association at York (ASAY) said in an email to *The CJN* that a member of its executive who wore a T-shirt that said "anti-Zionist vibes only" at York Federation of Students' (YFS) Multicultural Week Parade has stepped down from her position on the executive. The parade also fell on the same day as International Holocaust Remembrance Day, Jan. 27.

In the email, ASAY acting co-presidents McKenzie Toulouse and Rachelle Naomi Beswick said they were not aware the student was going to be wearing that shirt.

"This was a personal statement made without our consent and went against our constitution. It took away the voices within our own organization and pitted individuals and groups against one another during what was supposed to be a celebration of individuality for all students," they said.

ASAY apologized for the incident in both their email and on Facebook, and has consistently reiterated the importance of peace and inclusivity in its teachings and constitution, saying the shirt went against those values.

"The personal statement made resulted in further polarizing individuals and groups rather than building bridges and seeking understanding. Such actions are not representative of our traditional teachings," ASAY said in one comment on Facebook.

To that end, the group has been communicating with Jewish groups on campus. Toulouse and Beswick said their first instinct on walking past Hillel's office after they learned about the shirt was to "immediately apologize and acknowledge what was happening ... we didn't want students to feel marginalized and unwelcome a moment longer, as Aboriginal students we share a similar knowledge of pain and trauma."

They hope the former executive member can also engage in constructive dialogue.

"We continue to support the growth of our past executive member during this difficult time and hope this is an opportunity for education, understanding and outreach. We have asked that she address recent events on her own accord. While her actions may have been done with honest intentions they do not negate the immense impact they have made in our community," they said.

Anna Kissin, director of Hillel York, said in an email to *The CJN* that Hillel York is pleased to see ASAY's apology, and that the two groups have been in touch and will continue working on meaningful programming together. She also welcomed ASAY students to attend their events, "so our communities will better understand one another and we can work together to make our campus a better place." She added that Hillel has reached out to YFS and university administration to take steps to ensure all students feel safe.

The student wearing the T-shirt in question.
HILLEL YORK FACEBOOK POST

Hasbara Fellowships Canada said in a statement that it was also pleased to see ASAY's apology, as well as York President Rhonda Lenton's statement condemning the shirt.

Lenton wrote that she is concerned that pro-Israel and Zionist students were made to feel unwelcome at an event focusing on inclusion.

"The fact that this exclusion occurred on International Holocaust Remembrance Day and the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz is particularly painful. These messages are inconsistent with the aims of Multicultural Week to give 'students, faculty and staff a chance to celebrate their cultures and embrace the diversity of York,'" Lenton's statement said.

Toulouse and Beswick want those affected to know ASAY is serious about addressing their concerns. "In our culture we often facilitate talking circles wherein individuals commit to creating a safe space, feel comforted and able to share vulnerably and powerfully to seek understanding with one another. We would love to create a similar culture of true acceptance where students feel confident and welcomed, engaging in conversations to promote true healing," they said. ■

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Montreal doesn't adopt IHRA definition of anti-Semitism

JANICE ARNOLD
jarnold@thecjn.ca, MONTREAL

A motion to have Montreal adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism was withdrawn by the official opposition leader after he rejected the mayor's proposal that the matter be given further study.

"It's ludicrous, ridiculous," said Lionel Perez, leader of Ensemble Montréal, of Mayor Valérie Plante's suggestion at the Jan. 28 council meeting that an internal committee might explore a made-in Montreal definition of anti-Semitism.

"I reject that a municipal body has the knowledge and expertise in such a complex issue. It took 31 countries 12 years to develop this definition, and none other is so widespread," Perez told *The CJN*.

In the days leading up to the council meeting, which began on Jan. 27, Independent Jewish Voices Canada (IJV) campaigned against adoption of the definition, which it claims stifles criticism of Israel and advocacy for the Palestinian cause. They were joined by the Canadian-Palestinian Foundation and some labour unionists.

A small demonstration was held outside city hall and IJV raised objections during the council meeting's question period.

Lionel Perez

The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA), Federation CJA's advocacy arm, had urged the council to adopt the definition, which would have made it the first municipality in Canada to do so.

In a joint statement, the two organizations said they are "deeply troubled by (Plante's) inaction on anti-Semitism."

"We are deeply disappointed that (Plante) did not support the adoption of the most widely accepted definition of anti-Semitism, a tool endorsed by reputable international bodies and adopted by dozens of democratic countries, including Canada, to enhance the fight against resurgent anti-Semitism," federation president Gail Adelson-Marcovitz and CIJA Quebec co-chair Rabbi Reuben Poupko stated.

Motions to adopt the IHRA definition tabled in Calgary and Vancouver last year were met with public opposition. Calgary ultimately passed a modified motion recognizing International Holocaust Remembrance Day, without reference to the IHRA, while Vancouver referred the matter to a committee.

On Jan. 28, the Toronto-area Vaughan city council unanimously passed a resolution adopting the IHRA definition, making it the first Canadian municipality to do so.

Perez noted that the adoption of this working definition of contemporary anti-Semitism is more than symbolic. While not legally binding, an official definition would have an impact on, for example, the police department's hate crimes unit and the centre for the prevention of radicalization, he said.

Perez, who is Jewish, noted that the Ensemble Montréal motion additionally called for the city to mandate its diversity and inclusion service to produce working definitions of other forms of hate and racism.

CIJA and the federation commended Perez "for refusing to submit the internationally sanctioned and widely adopted IHRA definition to a review and rewording by a municipal commission lacking expertise on the matter."

Meanwhile, IJV applauded Montreal city council for its action, claiming victory after more than 300 letters against adoption were sent to councillors.

"We strongly believe that our safety as Jews is intimately tied with the safety and well-being of other communities targeted by hate and bigotry, and that includes the Palestinian people," its national co-ordinator Corey Balsam stated.

The IHRA definition states that, "Anti-Semitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities."

Among its examples includes the targeting of Israel as a "Jewish collectivity," accusing Jews of being more loyal to Israel than their own country, claiming Israel is a racist endeavour, subjecting Israel to "double standards," or criticizing Israel using anti-Semitic tropes or Nazi comparisons. ■

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Erratum

The photograph of Marvelle Koffler zl" that appeared in the January 30 issue of the CJN as part of the Koffler Centre of the Arts' tribute to our co-founder was erroneously reproduced without a photo credit. The photograph is by **Al Gilbert CM of Gilbert Studio.**

We apologize to the artist and Gilbert Studio for this oversight.

koffler

Holocaust survivors' testimony will live on

DIANE KOVEN
OTTAWA CORRESPONDENT

Ottawa – Seventy-five years after the liberation of Auschwitz, the 27th of January remains a day to remember, to commemorate and to honour the memories of those who perished during the darkest days of history. The date, designated by the United Nations General Assembly as International Holocaust Remembrance Day, continues to be an important reminder, especially as global anti-Semitism is once again on the rise.

At a ceremony hosted by Library and Archives Canada, in partnership with Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA), Jewish Federation of Ottawa, the Centre for Holocaust Education and Scholarship and the Wallenberg Citation Initiative, Holocaust survivor Pinchas Gutter shared his personal story of survival against all odds, losing his parents and twin sister in the horrors of the death camps.

Only seven years old when the war broke out, Gutter and his family left their home in Lodz for what they believed would be the safety of Warsaw where they spent three and a half years in the Warsaw Ghetto. From there, during the Ghetto uprising, he and his family were deported to Majdanek where both parents and his twin sister were murdered by the Nazis.

Attendees at Ottawa's Holocaust remembrance ceremony hold signs saying 'We Remember

Recounting his story – the twists and turns and various horrors – and eventual liberation, Gutter said he feels he speaks for all Holocaust survivors, "each one having his or her own story to tell." In recent years, he has felt the urgency of telling the stories to the world as fewer and fewer survivors are able to do so and soon there will no longer be anyone alive to share their stories. For this reason, he has recently become the first person to participate in a ground-breaking project using three-dimensional, fully interactive displays of Holocaust survivors telling their stories. The project, created by University of Southern California's Institute for Creative Technologies and Conscience Display, known as "New Dimensions in Testimony" will enable people to interact with the survivors in museums and classrooms around the world, even after they are gone.

"Due to the utter dedication of the team of technologists, there will be holographic images of survivors even after they are no longer alive," Gutter said. "As long as I have breath in my body and legs to carry me, I intend to share my story with anyone who will listen to me," he said.

Martin Sampson, vice-president of communications for CIJA, told the audience that although he is not Jewish, his job has been "the most profoundly rewarding and enriching experience of my entire professional life." Addressing his comments to the non-Jews present, he said "One of the things that link us is the deeply held belief that anti-Semitism is not just a Jewish problem … We have real skin in this game and we have to fight it at every opportunity."

Violinist Ralitsa Tcholakova provided musical interludes throughout the ceremony which concluded with the recitation of *Kaddish* by Rabbi Eytan Kenter of Kehillat Beth Israel. The event took place at Library and Archives Canada and was attended by members of both the Jewish and general community, including organizational leaders and politicians. Jon Fraser, MPP for Ottawa South, brought greetings and expressed solidarity.

As part of the international "We Remember" initiative, Martin Sampson asked everyone to hold the "We Remember" signs and participate in a group photo to be shared widely on social media. ■

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Grade six students to be versed in Hana's Suitcase

RON CSILLAG
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Amid the gloom of rotating teachers' strikes at the Toronto District School Board, a ray of light: All 17,000 students in Grade 6 at TDSB schools will receive a copy of *Hana's Suitcase*, the true story of Hana Brady, a young Jewish girl from Czechoslovakia who was murdered at Auschwitz.

The program's launch at TDSB headquarters on Jan. 27 had two tie-ins: It took place on International Holocaust Remembrance Day, which marks the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz – this year, the 75th – and kicked off the TDSB's involvement in Liberation75, a global gathering of Holocaust survivors, descendants, and educators slated for this spring in Toronto.

The "One Book Event" launch featured appearances by Toronto Mayor John Tory, *Hana's Suitcase* author Karen Levine, and Lara Brady, Hana Brady's niece, who brought along an array of war-era documents that belonged to Hana and her brother George – Lara's father, who died a year ago in Toronto at the age of 90.

Milestones and anniversaries often cause young people to question why something as horrific as the Holocaust

> "We all have a role to play in ensuring that something like this doesn't ever happen again."
>
> **Toronto Mayor John Tory**

should be commemorated so many years later, Tory said in his remarks.

The answer "is quite simple," the mayor said. "Beyond continuing to pay tribute to the lives of the millions who were lost, and to recognize and honour the survivors, it's because we all have a role to play in ensuring that something like this doesn't ever happen again."

In December, Toronto's city council voted to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day each Jan. 27.

Also on hand for the TDSB program were consular officials from Germany and Japan, representatives from Jewish advocacy groups, and Heather Reisman, CEO of Indigo Books and Music. The copies of *Hana's Suitcase* are being made available to students through a partnership with Indigo and the volume's publisher, Second Story Press.

Reisman told the launch that *Hana's Suitcase* is vital to "the notion of remembering, not just the liberation of Auschwitz, but that Auschwitz was part of a larger reality and a larger story, where six million Jews and 12 million people in total lost their lives. The number rolls off our tongues. Six million! But if each of us thinks that if we lost just one person, how that would change things."

Hana's Suitcase is Canada's most awarded children's book, has been translated into more than 40 languages, was turned into a stage play, and is the subject of a prize-winning radio documentary and film.

The connection to Japan is through Fumiko Ishioka, the curator of a Holocaust education centre in Tokyo, who, 20 years ago, was looking for something to help pique the interest of Japanese youngsters. She contacted the Auschwitz museum asking to borrow an artifact connected to the experiences of children at the death camp, and received an empty suitcase bearing Hana Brady's name and the German word *Waisenkind* (orphan). When children began asking questions about Hana, Ishioka tracked down George Brady in Toronto, and a story was born.

TDSB students in Grade 6 will also submit individual or group art projects to showcase what they learned from reading *Hana's Suitcase*. Students may submit poems, short stories, songs, sculptures paintings, a suitcase filled with artifacts or letters written to Hana Brady or to Levine.

Selected projects will be displayed during Jewish Heritage Month in May and at Liberation75, set to take place at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre from May 31 to June 2.

Later on Jan. 27, the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs co-hosted a reception for International Holocaust Remembrance Day at Israel's Toronto consulate, together with the World Jewish Congress. That event was attended by representatives of 15 diplomatic missions, as well as from provincial and municipal governments, school boards and other faith communities.

On the evening of Jan. 27, Tory and several city councillors joined community members and Ontario Lt.-Gov. Elizabeth Dowdeswell at city hall to commemorate the first International Holocaust Remembrance Day officially recognized by the City of Toronto. Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Centre hosted the event. ■

Synagogue recognizes Holocaust heroes

ALEX ROSE
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At an International Holocaust Remembrance Day event put on by Aish Toronto's Living Legacy Experience at the Village Shul on Jan. 27, speaker after speaker urged the audience to start referring to survivors as Holocaust heroes. The shul's Zale Newman took the stage around the middle of the event, after a presentation by JRoots Poland educator Rabbi Michael Olshin and before the testimony of survivor Irving Buchbinder, to share his thoughts on the use of the word hero instead of survivor.

"We do not refer to them at our shul, these people, as survivors. A survivor is, you're on Lake Simcoe and your boat goes down, and you hang on until they come and rescue you. That's a survivor," he said. "These people were taken from their home. They lost their childhood, their education, their family, their sense of home, their sense of place in the world, their joy in life, and they fought on."

Newman said that after years of learning, he finally knows everything he can hope to understand about the Holocaust, save the answers to two questions for the heroes

Zale Newman, centre, surrounded by Holocaust heroes, including Irving Buchbinder, right.
LIORA KOGAN PHOTO

that will always elude him: How did you survive? And how did you rebuild?

"I will never understand (how they survived). I don't want to find out. And all I can say is I think it's miraculous," he said. "It makes no human sense to me. Yet you're here and you're all a pleasure to speak to. And you're sweet and you built families and professions ... there's only one word that I could use (to describe) that, and that's heroic. That is not survival. That's heroism!"

After Newman spoke, Buchbinder took the stage to recount some stories from his time before the war, living under Nazi rule, surviving various camps, fighting for Israel's independence and eventually settling and building a life in Canada.

During his time as a prisoner, Buchbinder had many near brushes with death. There was a time he ran away and hid in a hole under his barracks to avoid the guards sending him to his death. The leader of the camp, a hunchbacked German, wanted to know who the "rabbit" was that had managed to avoid them. After a few days, people pointed Buchbinder out, and the commandant called Buchbinder into his office.

"If you can do this, you're entitled to live," the commandant told Buchbinder, before giving him clothes and food.

Another near miss came when Buchbinder was taken to the concentration camp Mauthausen.

"They were taking us to the gas chamber, but apparently the partisans blew up the gas chambers," he said. "They couldn't burn us. So we stayed there for about a week without food, without clothes, and all of a sudden we heard screaming ... and we ran out, we saw all the Germans were gone, and we looked at the hill, we saw American tanks. This was May 5, 1945."

Buchbinder eventually made his way to what was then Palestine, where he fought for Israel's independence. He then travelled to Toronto, where some relatives were living, and where he eventually co-founded the Association for the Soldiers of Israel - Canada, which supports the well-being of Israel's active soldiers.

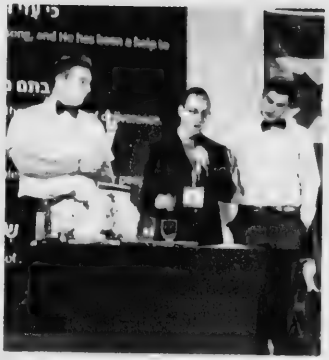
Buchbinder celebrated his 93rd birthday 11 days before his talk, and, as he kept reminding the audience, he believes he has a lot of time left.

But eventually the surviving heroes will pass away, and the Holocaust will recede further into the past. How will we keep their memory alive?

"The facts are important," Rabbi Olshin said. "But honestly, we're going to forget them. What's important is, what are the lessons for us? What can we learn from the story?" ■

SPONSORED CONTENT

Representatives of Limmud FSU International meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.



Clockwise from top: Limmud FSU leaders, from left, Harry Rosenbaum, Matthew Bronfman and Jon Geist; Havdalah recited by Erez Diena and the Jewish Drama Youth Theatre; Young Limmudniks at the 2018 festival Israel@70.

Limmud FSU speaks to more than just Russians

Do you know Limmud FSU? While the name includes the word "Limmud," it's a distinct and separate organization. "FSU" stands for "former Soviet Union." Limmud FSU, an entirely volunteer-based organization founded in 2006 by Chaim Chesler and Sandra Cahn, affords Canadian Russian-speaking Jews the chance to belong and enrich their lives through Jewish tradition, learning and community engagement.

However, its relevance reaches beyond the Russian community, and its success is imperative to the entire Jewish community. That importance is illustrated by the philanthropists who support it and by what people say about it. Israeli Consul General Galit Baram calls the organization "young and dedicated," adding that she was glad to see "so many young people" attending.

The organization's supporters include international leaders Matthew Bronfman, Aaron G. Frenkel and Ron Lauder, as well as prominent community members in Toronto, such as Harry Rosenbaum, Warren Kimel, Shoel Silver and Julia Koschitzky. UJA Federation of Greater Toronto, Genesis Philanthropy Group, Miriam and Larry Robbins Foundation and Schwartz/Reisman Centre also lend their generosity. The support of these groups – and donors, in general – is critical in making Limmud FSU's activities possible, as participant fees don't cover the full cost of programming.

Limmud FSU reaches out to Russian-speaking Jews with volunteer-driven, egalitarian, pluralist peer-learning festivals and programs on Jewish topics, in which all lecturers and presenters are volunteers. Both participants and presenters pay a fee to attend the conferences, which are complemented by ongoing study opportunities for leading activists.

And now, Limmud FSU has introduced Limmud FSU Community Labs, a joint project of Limmud FSU International and the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs of the State of Israel, to encourage activists to mount grassroots educational programming.

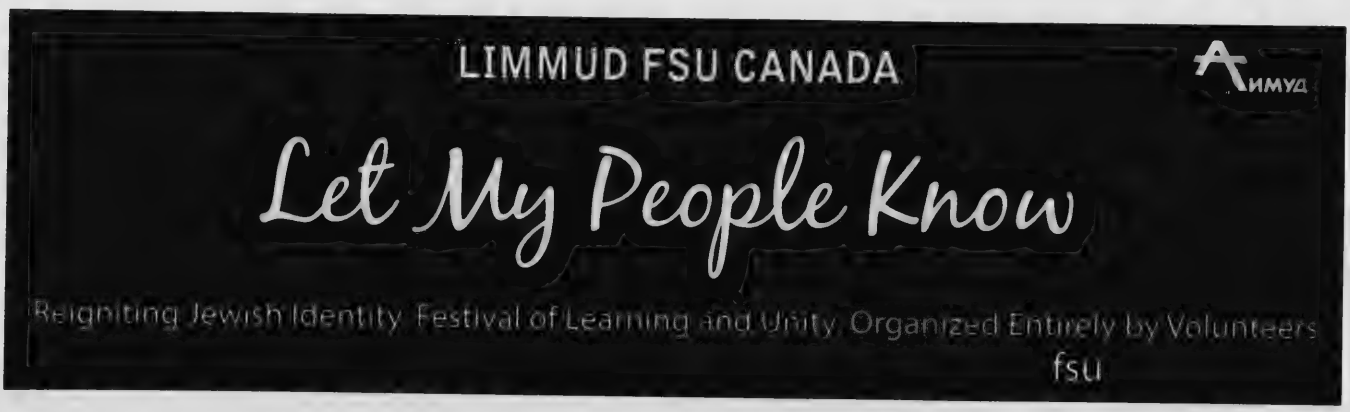
Limmud FSU's activities boast a track record of engaging Russian-speaking Jews through Jewish literacy, Jewish identity and affiliation with Israel. In line with its 2018 strategic plan, it has proven to be "the most successful effort to attract … Russian-speaking Jews to a powerful, high-level Jewish experience".

This year, from March 27-29, Limmud FSU Canada will hold its sixth festival at Blue Mountain Resort, near Collingwood, Ont. It expects to attract more than 500 young adults and families to choose from 80 lectures, master classes and workshops, as well as Shabbat celebrations and a Saturday night gala. The vast majority (85 per cent) of lectures and workshops will be held in English.

The event's themes are social and political, spiritual, Israeli and international. Topics range from Jewish cooking to traditional texts and Yiddish culture. The conference's 40 speakers and presenters from around the world include Elyakim Rubinstein, former vice-president of the Supreme Court of Israel and the country's attorney general from 1997 to 2004; Dorit Golender, vice-president of Genesis Philanthropy Group and former Israeli ambassador to Moscow; Sophie Ben-Dor, the daughter of famous Israeli spy Eli Cohen; Mossad operatives who spent most of their careers working in counter-terrorism and Israeli intelligence; Adrienne Gold, international lecturer for the Jewish Women's Renaissance Project; and Rabbi Michael Skobac, educational director of Jews for Judaism.

"The Limmud festivals are unique happenings that unite all of us, whatever our different levels of observance or knowledge of Judaism and Jewish life and culture may be, "says Natan Sharansky, a human rights activist, Soviet refusenik and former chairman of the Jewish Agency. "For this, Limmud FSU deserves our warmest gratitude and appreciation. Long may its current educational work and promotion of a sense of Jewish unity and pride continue to flourish." ■

Are you passionate about our collective Jewish future? Consider putting your power behind Limmud FSU Canada. Your help is vital to their success.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Poll shows Canadians lack knowledge about Holocaust

RON CSILLAG
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A distressing new poll released just before International Holocaust Remembrance Day on Jan. 27 suggests that fewer than half of Canadians know that six million Jews were murdered during the Second World War.

Canadians aged 35-44 were the least likely to know how many Jews died during the Holocaust – just 32 per cent got it right – while Canadians older than 75 were most likely, at 55 per cent. Among the youngest cohort, those aged 18-24, only 40 per cent knew the right answer.

Conducted for the Association for Canadian Studies (ACS) in Montreal by Leger Marketing, the study surveyed 2,295 Canadians nationally last November.

Overall, it found that 43 per cent of respondents correctly identified six million as the number of Jews killed in the Holocaust. Among francophones, it was 36 per cent, 46.6 per cent English speakers, and 52 per cent for those speaking another language.

Just over 30 per cent of those polled said they were not sure of the total.

More educated Canadians were more likely to know the right answer: 50 per cent of those holding a bachelors degree or better responded correctly, while just over 35 per cent of high school graduates did.

Regionally, those in Quebec were least likely to know the right answer (36 per cent), while those in Saskatchewan were most likely (55 per cent). In Ontario, just over 44 per cent of those polled replied correctly.

Jack Jedwab, president of the ACS, said the results reflect "significant gaps" in Canadians' awareness of the Holocaust.

However, he added: "I think we need to be mindful not to set the bar too high and presume that lack of knowledge is a function of disinterest."

He said lack of knowledge often arises from people "simply not having access or exposure to the information." Without "significant" government assistance, the Jewish community, "which is the main driver in reaching out with information, will continue to encounter challenges," Jedwab told *The CJN*.

The poll also cross-referenced knowledge of how many Jews died in the Holocaust with Canadians' level of trust in Jews. Just over 63 per cent of those who "somewhat" trust Jews knew the answer of six million. Only 2.7 per cent of those who don't trust Jews "at all" replied correctly. Curiously, among those who trust Jews "a lot," just 16 per cent knew the correct answer.

The survey also asked about anti-Semitism. It found that Albertans, Atlantic Canadians and Quebecers were least likely to believe that anti-Semitism was a problem in their provinces during the Second World War – at about 40 per cent each. The highest number who said that war-era anti-Semitism had been a problem – 56 per cent of respondents – was in Ontario.

Quebecers were also most likely to believe that Jewish refugees were welcomed to Canada during the war (67 per cent). Least likely to believe that were residents of Manitoba and Saskatchewan (51 per cent).

The survey echoes the results of a poll from a year ago, done in part for the Azrieli Foundation, which found that 54 per cent of respondents did not know that six million Jews perished in the Holocaust. Among those aged 18-34, it was 62 per cent.

The latest figures are also similar to data from the United States, where recent polling from the Pew Research Center found that roughly 45 per cent of Americans knew that six million Jews were killed, and 29 per cent did not.

A second poll conducted for the ACS found that 60 per cent of those surveyed would support sending Canadian troops to where genocide was occurring. The sentiment was strongest in Quebec (67 per cent) and lowest in Manitoba and Saskatchewan (52 per cent).

In a statement to *The CJN*, Carson Phillips, managing director of the Sarah and Chaim Neuberger Holocaust Education Centre, said the lack of historical knowledge around key elements of the Holocaust "may be a reflection of educational approaches that focus on larger conceptual issues such as understanding the implications and effects of racism and anti-Semitism, the role of the individual to make a difference in society, or learning universal lessons from the Holocaust."

He said the survey results indicate the need "to carefully balance important historical information with the enduring understandings that come from studying the Holocaust." ■

Trial against some Hasidic schools to begin

JANICE ARNOLD
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A landmark trial concerning the legality of some Hasidic schools in Quebec is scheduled to get underway Feb. 10 and is expected to last at least two weeks, involving the provincial government, public school boards and a host of Jewish schools and religious institutions.

The case is brought by two former members of the Tash Hasidic community in Boisbriand, north of Montreal, Yochonon Lowen and his wife Clara Wasserstein, against the attorney general of Quebec, Commission scolaire Seigneurie des Mille Iles, Le Grand Séminaire Rabbinique de Montréal, Collège Rabbinique de Montréal Oir Hachaim d'Tash, Centre d'éducation religieuse Khal Oir Hachaim, Centre d'éducation Beth Tziril, Yeshiva Oir Hachayim, Académie des Jeunes Filles Beth Tziril, and Elimelech Lowy, the community's spiritual leader.

The Superior Court trial will be the culmination of Lowen's years-long grievance against the Tash schools he attended as a child. He alleges the schools failed to teach even the most basic secular subjects thus depriving him of normal opportunities in life and that the education ministry and other public authorities have tolerated the situation at these and other haredi schools in Quebec for decades.

Lowen, 42, first took legal action in 2014 when he attempted to sue for $1.25 million the education department, and the school board and youth protection department serving Boisbriand, as well as two Tash schools. That never went further than sending a demand letter, and he later changed lawyers.

Lowen and Wasserstein's current lawyer Clara Poissant-Lespérance, said the couple is not seeking damages. Their goal is to obtain a declaratory judgment that the Hasidic schools disregarded the law and are, in fact illegal, and that the government is also culpable for not enforcing the law. Although about a quarter-century has passed since Lowen and Wasserstein were in those schools, the situation is not much improved today, she said.

The trial will be long because of the number of witnesses the plaintiffs will call. These include representatives of the Education Ministry, Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board, youth protection, and the Boisbriand Hasidic schools.

It has been a tortuous journey to get to this point for the couple who live in Montreal and have four children.

In February 2019 they finally won the right to take their case to court from Superior Court Justice André Wery, who blocked off 15 days for the trial.

The couple filed a motion for a declaratory judgment back in May 2016.

The motion seeks a declaration from Superior Court that the schools named operate in violation of the Education Act, the Act Respecting Private Education, the Charter of the French Language, and the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.

In tolerating the situation, the Quebec government is not meeting its legal obligation, they argue.

In May 2017, a Superior Court judge dismissed motions filed by the defendants to have the couple's application thrown out, ruling that their case could be heard.

The judge concluded that Lowen and Wasserstein had "clear standing to act in the public interest and that the action presented a serious question that had to be decided by the court," said Poissant-Lespérance.

The judge did reject their claim against the local school board, the Commission scolaire Seigneurie des Mille Iles. However, the board is cited in this most recent round.

This will be the first court challenge of its kind in Quebec, where successive governments have tried to find a resolution to so-called "illegal" ultra-Orthodox schools for many years.

A few years ago, the Liberal government agreed to a homeschooling arrangement whereby children are taught the compulsory subjects in the provincial curriculum by their parents, who are overseen by a school board, while continuing to go to their religious schools.

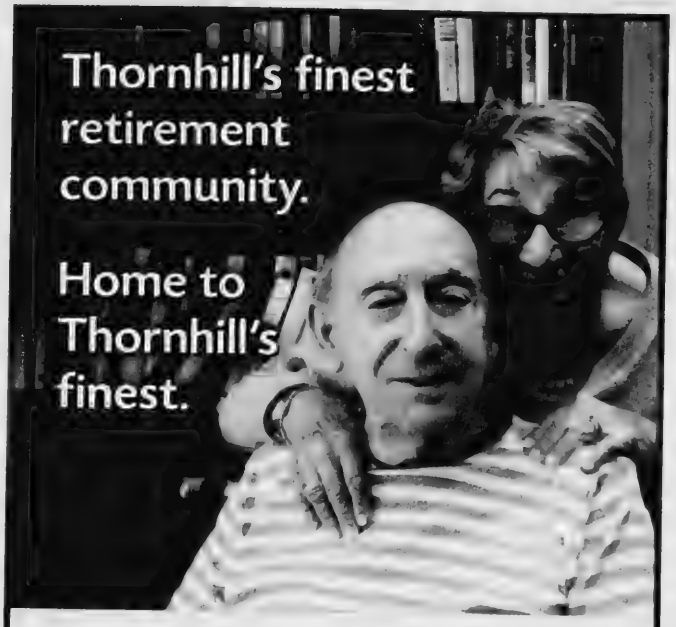
Today, more than 2,000 haredi students are enrolled in homeschooling, including those in the Tash community, who are overseen by the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board. However, Poissant-Lespérance said the curriculum is not being taught adequately.

Moreover, the Tash schools are not in compliance with the law in other respects, such as having a licence, she pointed out.

When contacted by *The CJN*, Wasserstein said she and her husband are hopeful, but have been advised by their lawyer not to comment in advance of the trial.

Lowen told *The CJN* in the past that he received virtually no instruction not related to religion, that he left school unable to read or write in English or French, and could hardly do basic math. He had difficulty finding employment outside the Hasidic milieu.

"Everything except Torah was forbidden; some leaders said it was a sin [to learn anything secular]," said Lowen, who also claims he has suffered psychologically by being brought up in an extremely insular environment. He left the Tash community more than a decade ago. ■



Meet Joyce and Leon, two of Thornhill's finest. Married for 64 years, they proudly raised a family of 3 children in Toronto. Long-time members of Beth Tikvah Synagogue, Joyce and Leon continue to lead an active lifestyle, enjoying time with their 5 grandchildren, and 2 great-grandchildren, along with exercise programs, interactive presentations, and plenty of entertainment within V!VA Thornhill Woods' vibrant community.

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Ambassador welcomes Canadian IDF Lone Soldiers

JENNIFER TZIVIA MACLEOD
SPECIAL TO THE CJN, TEL AVIV

Lone soldiers serve in the Israel Defense Forces without their immediate family in Israel and work long hours, far from home.

"What we wanted you to know is that we're your family, too," Canadian Ambassador Deborah Lyons told a delegation of 33 Canadian lone soldiers at a reception at her Tel Aviv residence on Jan. 16.

Most of the soldiers were from Montreal or Toronto, with a few from Edmonton and Vancouver.

Montrealer Robbie Kohos, 21, is serving in combat intelligence. He's almost halfway through his two-and-a-half-year service.

"I went to Jewish elementary school, but I actually hated learning anything related to Hebrew studies and Jewish studies." But a bar mitzvah trip to Israel – he says he wanted to go to Europe, but his parents insisted – gradually led him to feel a very deep connection. From there, he began hatching a plan to enter the IDF after high school.

As much as he loves Israel, Kohos is just as determined to fulfil his post-IDF dream of returning to Montreal to work in real estate investment, and take back what he's learned.

"Your knowledge of automatic weapons

Pictured, from left, Yaakov Herman, Robbie Kohos, Deborah Lyons and Ayala Rotenberg. JENNIFER TZIVIA MACLEOD PHOTO

obviously isn't going to help you so much in Canada," he says. "But the lessons you learn, being responsible, learning to take care of yourself, to overcome really hard things. Especially being a lone soldier, moving here, it's a tough thing."

While lone soldiers are prepared for physical challenges, many aren't as adept at dealing with the emotional hazards. They also often have trouble transitioning into post-army life. The IDF offers social work services and support, but although lone soldiers comprise only 4 per cent of Israel's military, they make up 30 per cent of its suicide rate.

A number of programs aim to ease the transition – secular programs, like Garin Tzabar, and religious programs, like Lev LaChayal – providing pre- and post-enlistment support and "adopting" lone soldiers to create a softer landing.

Easing into Israeli society was less of a problem for Ayala Rotenberg, 20, a corporal in the air force. The Toronto native came to Israel for grades 10 to 12 with a program called Naaleh and has lived here almost constantly since. Thanks to Naaleh, she was already up to speed in Hebrew – "I've been told I don't have an accent" – and better able to cope with the emotional aspects. "It's really tough. I think the toughest part is not being with family."

Rotenberg earned an associate's degree through a girls' engineering program and is now working as an F-15 fighter plane technician. Rotenberg has served nine months of a two-year minimum service, which could be extended by another year and a half. She may pursue engineering when she's finished and plans to stay in Israel.

Being a lone soldier forces her to be more independent than her IDF peers. When they have time off, they all go home to family, while she has to shop and cook for herself and do her own laundry. Although one perk she mentions of her base near Rehovot is that it has a washer and dryer, so her laundry doesn't have to pile up between weekends off-base.

Lone soldiers receive a higher salary than ordinary IDF soldiers, ranging from NIS 2,292 to 3,520 (about $1,100 to C$1,330) per month, plus other benefits, like subsidized housing, grocery vouchers, and extra vacation time.

Many also discover less tangible, but longer-lasting, benefits. Yaakov Herman, 20, a corporal in the Nachal Brigade, credits the IDF for two major discoveries: the diversity of the Jewish world – "it's an eye-opener" – and new truths about himself. "You learn how good a person you are. You're exhausted all the time, and whether you're going to help somebody else out, take a shortcut here, you really see how high a standard you're going to hold yourself to. How strong or not strong you are."

Though there are only a few English speakers in his unit, Herman, who's also from Toronto, has felt very accepted. Some Israelis tell him they find it inspiring that he's chosen to serve voluntarily. With about seven months to go of his 17-month service, he's planning to stay in Israel after the IDF.

There are currently 45 Canadian IDF lone soldiers, among 35,000 Canadian citizens in Israel. ■

Richmond Hill figure skater competes for Israel

PAUL LUNGEN
plungen@thecjn.ca

For an 18-year-old, Mark Gorodnitsky sure does get around a lot. The Richmond Hill native has already been to the Czech Republic, Croatia, Slovenia, Kazakhstan, Austria, Taipei, France and the United States, not to mention Israel.

That's what being an elite figure skater will do for you.

Despite his place of birth, Gorodnitsky, who trains at the Richmond Training Centre, north of Toronto, does not compete for Canada. Instead, he's a member of the surprisingly large Israeli figure skating team, which is making its presence felt around the world.

Mark's sister, Maya, 16, is also a member of the Israeli team.

Just a few weeks ago, Mark competed in the European Figure Skating Championships in Graz, Austria, where he finished 17th out of 35 skaters. Fellow Israeli, Alexei Bychenko, ended the competition in 12th.

Considering that at his age, it's the first year he's competed in the senior men's category, he can feel pretty good about his result.

Mark Gorodnitsky at the rink PAUL LUNGEN PHOTO

There were no Canadian skaters entered in the men's event at the European Championships, just lots of Russians, Italians, Czechs and other Europeans, but as an Israeli, the Euro stop was an important part of his schedule.

So how does a Canadian-born skater end up representing Israel?

As Gorodnitsky explains it, his father, Dmitry, was born in Belarus and moved to Israel. He lived there for eight years before coming to Canada, where he met Mark's mother, Margarita, who hails from Latvia.

"My dad lived in Israel. That gave me the platform that allowed me to compete for Israel," Gorodnitsky said. "The Israeli [skating] federation contacted my parents and asked if I'd compete for them."

At first, at around age 14 or 15, Gorodnitsky wasn't exactly ecstatic about that prospect. But, "as I grew, I realized what a privilege it was, and what an opportunity."

The competition for a spot on the Canadian team is tougher and though he's confident he could make it – as a youngster, he earned a bronze medal at a national event – the path to international success is more open via the Israeli route, he said.

So far, he's taken full advantage of the opportunity; 2019 was a pretty good year for Gorodnitsky on the international stage.

Competing as a junior, he finished second at the Ice Mall Cup in Eilat; fifth in the International Skating Union (ISU) JGP Grand Prix de Courchevel; and seventh in the ISU JGP Croatia Cup in Zagreb.

Competing in the senior division last year, he finished seventh in the ISU CS Autumn Classic International in Oakville; fifth in the Denis Ten Memorial Challenge in Almaty, Kazahkstan; and 12th in the ISU CS Golden Spin of Zagreb.

At the European Championships in January, he registered his best ever personal scores, suggesting an upward trajectory in his performances.

One of his Richmond Hill-based coaches, Andrei Berezintsev, believes Gorodnitsky has what it takes to excel on the international stage.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 36

SHALOM HARTMAN מכון שלום הרטמן INSTITUTE

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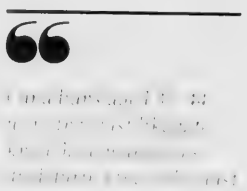


The survey also asked about anti-Semitism. It found that Albertans, Atlantic Canadians and Quebecers were least likely to believe that anti-Semitism was a problem in their provinces during the Second World War – at about 40 per cent each. The highest number who said that war-era anti-Semitism had been a problem – 56 per cent of respondents – was in Ontario.

Quebecers were also most likely to believe that Jewish refugees were welcomed to Canada during the war (67 per cent). Least likely to believe that were residents of Manitoba and Saskatchewan (51 per cent).

The survey echoes the results of a poll from a year ago, done in part for the Azrieli Foundation, which found that 54 per cent of respondents did not know that six million Jews perished in the Holocaust. Among those aged 18-34, it was 62 per cent.

The latest figures are also similar to data from the United States, where recent polling from the Pew Research Center found that roughly 45 per cent of Americans knew that six million Jews were killed, and 29 per cent did not.

A second poll conducted for the ACS found that 60 per cent of those surveyed would support sending Canadian troops to where genocide was occurring. The sentiment was strongest in Quebec (67 per cent) and lowest in Manitoba and Saskatchewan (52 per cent).

In a statement to *The CJN*, Carson Phillips, managing director of the Sarah and Chaim Neuberger Holocaust Education Centre, said the lack of historical knowledge around key elements of the Holocaust "may be a reflection of educational approaches that focus on larger conceptual issues such as understanding the implications and effects of racism and anti-Semitism, the role of the individual to make a difference in society, or learning universal lessons from the Holocaust."

He said the survey results indicate the need "to carefully balance important historical information with the enduring understandings that come from studying the Holocaust." ■

INTERNATIONAL

The key points of the 'deal of the century'

GABE FRIEDMAN
WASHINGTON, JTA

U.S. President Donald Trump unveiled his long-awaited Middle East peace plan on Tuesday, Jan. 28, and the release event was a doozy.

In the most basic sense, the plan is a two-state solution. But the statements from Trump and Netanyahu, along with the text of the plan, which was released in full (have already triggered a wave of speculation and more than a little confusion.

Here's a breakdown of the plan's most basic components and what they mean moving forward:

• At its core, the plan proposes a two-state solution, ideally envisioning an autonomous Palestinian state. However, as U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman stressed in a phone call with reporters, Israel would retain security control over all the land that would include a Palestinian state. So even though the Palestinians would have their own system of government throughout their state, Israeli forces would still be allowed to patrol and exert their will in the area.

That is essentially how Israeli soldiers act now: they are not a constant presence in Palestinian areas, but they move in and out as they please. In that sense, life for Palestinians in the West Bank would not change much.

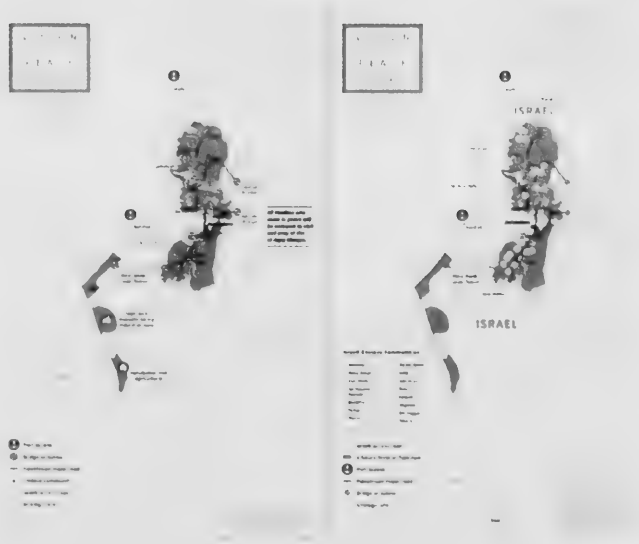
But another provision of the plan –allowing Palestinians to move freely between the West Bank and Gaza – would be a major change. Palestinians currently cannot move between the two areas without Israeli approval, which is rarely granted. Family members and others would no longer be separated as they are now.

• The plan also contains something that past U.S. proposals haven't included: a specific map that delineates what the potential Israeli and Palestinian state borders would be.

The proposed Palestinian state would consist of most of the West Bank (about 70-80 per cent, according to estimates), the mostly undeveloped territory between Jerusalem and Jordan, and Gaza, the strip of land in the middle of Israel's western coast.

• Under the plan, controversial parts of the West Bank would become officially recognized Israeli territory.

This includes all of the Israeli "communities" – code word for settlements – that are dotted throughout the potential future Palestinian state, as well as the Jordan Valley, the strategically important swath of land that Israel has largely controlled since the Six-Day War in 1967.



A map of the proposed peace deal. The proposed Palestinian state would consist of most of the West Bank (about 80 per cent, according to estimates), the mostly undeveloped territory between Jerusalem and Jordan, and Gaza, the strip of land in the middle of Israel's western coast.

• The plan gives the Israelis and Palestinians four years to accept these borders.

Netanyahu announced at last week's news conference that during that time, Israel will freeze any new settlement construction that would encroach on the Palestinian state outlined in the peace plan.

However, he also said that Israel will look to immediately "apply its laws" to existing settlements and the Jordan Valley, whether or not the Palestinians signal that they will buy into the U.S. proposal.

•To some, this may sound like Netanyahu is using the plan's release as an opportunity to annex that territory right away, as he has long desired.

Netanyahu was careful not to use the word "annex" in his remarks on Jan. 28 preferring the "apply its law" usage. That could be his way of making the dramatic move more palatable to the international community, which undoubtedly will criticize the Israeli leader.

> *Under the plan, controversial parts of the West Bank would become officially recognized Israeli territory*

Moving forward, look for the language over this issue to be debated.

• Another key part of the plan involves the dismantling of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, two Palestinian groups seen as terrorists by a large part of the international community. Hamas currently governs Gaza with an iron fist, so removing it would significantly change the coastal strip.

Palestinian officials also would have to agree to stop its policy of paying the families of terrorists who attack Israelis.

• The plan also aims to create a high-speed rail connection between the West Bank and Gaza, two Palestinian areas that feel physically sequestered because of Israeli security policies.

The "Trump Economic Plan" portion of the document says that the accord has the "potential to facilitate more than US $50 billion of investment over 10 years." It doesn't get into detail about where that would come from, but it likely means from the U.S. and a coalition of Arab states that support the plan.

• It's safe to say, at least at this point, that the plan's chance of success – success meaning that the Palestinians will agree to it – is close to nil.

That's because the mere release of this plan is a big win for Netanyahu and the mainstream Israeli right. It codifies the full U.S. support of Israel's eventual annexation of the West Bank settlements and the Jordan Valley, which Israel says is both vital to its security and is part of its rightful ancestral territory.

It also keeps security control of both states – essentially everything from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean, as Friedman put it – under Israel's purview.

The only thing that might remotely worry Netanyahu is how the proposed settlement freeze will play among Israeli settlers, a demographic he has fiercely courted over his record tenure as prime minister (especially since 2015).

The plot has thickened considerably for Benny Gantz, Netanyahu's political rival. Since Gantz has dismissed the idea of governing with Netanyahu under a unity coalition and rotating the prime minister title, it's notable that he has wholeheartedly endorsed the plan (at least according to Trump). It could signal that some form of reconciliation is on the horizon before yet another Israeli election in March – its third in less than a year.

As for the Palestinians, they objected to the plan from the outset, and the Arab League joined in condemnation last Saturday. The proposed lack of security control will be seen as a deal breaker, and the Israeli West Bank settlements present all kinds of complications. It would be a Swiss cheese state.

But even if the Palestinians completely reject the plan, could it jump-start a new series of talks between Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas? We'll have to wait and see. ■

Analysis

What if Trump's pro-Israel plan turns out the opposite?

David Horovitz
JERUSALEM

Israelis, consensually, do not believe that we can make peace with the Palestinians, or even safely separate from them, any time soon.

Israelis well remember the Second Intifada, when the IDF's withdrawal from major West Bank Palestinian cities under the Oslo Accords facilitated the unchecked growth of an infrastructure of Hamas and Fatah terrorism, dispatching a horrific years-long onslaught of suicide bombers into our malls, our stores, our buses, rendering our reality here almost untenable and costing hundreds upon hundreds of Israeli civilian lives.

Israelis continue to grapple with the violent consequences of our 2005 unilateral withdrawal from Gaza to the pre-1967 lines, which was followed by a Hamas takeover, three major rounds of conflict, relentless intermittent rocket fire and endless border violence – all accompanied by a soundtrack of international criticism of Israel for the crime of trying to protect ourselves against attacks from a territory to which we stake no claim.

Israelis recall that in 2008 when Prime Minister Ehud Olmert desperately sought an accommodation with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, essentially giving the Palestinians everything they ostensibly sought, Abbas hemmed and hawed and ultimately walked away. Since then, the relatively moderate (compared to his predecessor and likely successors) Abbas has presided over a Palestinian hierarchy that teaches and incites hostility to Israel, and has himself delivered a series of speeches deriding Israel's legitimacy, notoriously branding the Jewish state "a colonial project that has nothing to do with Judaism."

It is because our attempts in recent years both to negotiate an agreement and to unilaterally set safe borders have failed that the traditional advocates of "land for peace" efforts have been relegated to the margins of Israeli politics. Ahead of March 2's elections, Labor (which has internalized the impossibility of substantive progress with the Palestinians today, but strives to keep open the option of a two-state solution in the future) and Meretz (the one Zionist party that still insists a viable accord is possible now) were compelled to join forces or risk disappearing from the Knesset beneath the 3.5 per cent electoral threshold.

The only credible alternative to a government led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is a party (Blue and White) helmed by an ex-IDF chief of staff (Benny Gantz) that principally opposes the prime minister not for his stance on the Palestinians, but over his insistence on trying to retain power while he is being prosecuted in three criminal cases.

A wall with graffiti painted by Palestinians showing U.S. President Donald Trump with a footprint on his face in Gaza City on Jan. 29. ALI AHMED/FLASH90 PHOTO

That we are about to hold our third general elections within 12 months underlines that Israelis are not consensually sure they want the indefatigable Netanyahu as their prime minister any more. But the right and centre dominance of Israeli politics confirms that we are consensually certain that relinquishing territory for a promise of peace is a nonstarter, now and in the foreseeable future.

So, the plan unveiled last week at the White House by U.S. President Donald Trump should be wonderful news for the electorate, for an Israel so bleakly realistic about the current impossibility of peacemaking. Right?

Well, not necessarily.

The Trump deal places prime importance in any accord on Israel's security needs, and envisions a Palestinian state with restricted sovereignty so that it cannot threaten Israel. It dismisses the outrageous Palestinian demand for both their own state and for millions of refugees and their descendants to flow into Israel and overwhelm ours. It calls out the Palestinian leadership for decades of intransigent rejectionism and hostility.

But it also contains two core components that threaten its declared best intentions for Israel, and that move it away from the Israeli consensus.

First, while the White House has indicated that the terms are not set in stone, and indeed Secretary of State Mike Pompeo explicitly encouraged the Palestinians to submit a "counter-offer," key territorial elements at the heart of the "Vision" are manifestly nonnegotiable.

The "conceptual maps" included in the plan allocate 30 per cent of the West Bank to Israel, including all the settlements and the Jordan Valley area, with the assurance of American recognition if and when Israel annexes those territories.

In the short period since the deal was made public, confusion and contradiction have erupted over the timing of Israeli annexation – with U.S. Ambassador David Friedman insisting on Jan. 28 that Israel can go ahead and annex right now, and the president's peace envoy Jared Kushner the next day stating that the U.S .would not back such a move until Israel has a fully functioning government, post-elections. But there has been no disputing the territorial division, and no walk-back from the U.S. commitment to endorse Israel's sovereignty in all the allocated areas.

This provision for unilateral Israeli annexation of 30 per cent of the West Bank discredits the U.S. assurance that the deal can serve as a basis for negotiation, standing at decisive odds with a statement from Trump himself only a day before he unveiled it. "Now, without them," the president said of the Palestinians, "we don't do the deal."

And while the likelihood of the Palestinians under Abbas opting to re-engage with the Trump administration is precisely zero – "We say 1,000 times: no, no and no to the deal of the century," was the PA chief's predictably nuanced immediate response to the plan; he has now announced he is cutting all ties to the U.S. and Israel, including security co-ordination – the danger is that unilateral annexation on this scale and in these areas means no future Palestinian leadership has any incentive to engage either.

Secondly, the plan provides for 15 isolated Israeli settlements – located in the heart of the territory potentially designated for the restricted Palestinian state – to remain *in situ*, as so-called "Israeli Enclave Communities."

The concern is that leaving these "enclaves" inside quasi-Palestine will create a reality not unlike the Gaza of old, where 7-8,000 Jews lived in some 20 heavily protected settlements. As Jewish islands in a sea of Palestinian hostility, the intended West Bank "enclaves" – many of which have long been the targets of horrific acts of terrorism – will require extraordinary security protection.

Residents of these settlements, while appreciating the promise of American-backed Israeli annexation, are wary of their looming formal isolation, and not much comforted by the assurance that the Palestinian entity surrounding them will be demilitarized. The settler leadership is insisting that the enclaves will have to be expanded.

Meanwhile, their intended permanent presence further undermines the self-governing credibility of the envisioned Palestinian state, again reducing the likelihood of any future Palestinian leadership returning to the negotiating table.

However frequently described as central components of a "pro-Israel" package, these two core components will hardly fit that description if their consequence is the closing of the door on a negotiated accord far into the future. They will hardly fit that description if, too, their consequence is the fraying of Israel's precious existing treaties and ties with the Arab world.

The provision for the enclaves matches Netanyahu's pledge that no settlers will be uprooted, accords with Ambassador Friedman's dedicated support of the settlement movement, and doubtless pleases Trump's evangelical supporters. But it marks quite a departure from the U.S. president's initial wariness of the enterprise. (Settlements are "not a good thing for peace… Every time you take land for settlements, there is less land left," he told Sheldon Adelson's *Israel Hayom* three years ago, shortly after taking office.)

As for the stated readiness to support unilateral annexation, that seems tailored more to Netanyahu's short-term political needs than Israel's long-term interest in an eventual agreement. (Gantz, anxious not to say no to Trump but wary of the deal's unilateral provisions, is desperately trying to square the circle – promising if he is elected next month to advance the plan, impossibly, "in full co-ordination with the governments of the U.S., Jordan, Egypt, others in the region and the Palestinians.")

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

U.S. official lambastes Arab rejection of plan

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF
JERUSALEM

A senior U.S. official last Saturday lambasted the Arab League's rejection of the recently released Trump peace plan, saying in a statement that such dismissals would not benefit the Palestinian people.

"It is only by having a willingness to try a new approach that we will make a breakthrough in a conflict that has left the Palestinian people to suffer for decades," a senior administration official said in a written statement.

"Past Arab League resolutions have placated Palestinian leadership and not led to peace or progress and it is important to try a new approach or the Palestinian people's fate will not change," the official added.

The comments from Washington came after the Arab League voted during an emergency meeting in Cairo to unanimously reject U.S. President Donald Trump's controversial Middle East plan, calling it "unfair" to Palestinians.

The official attempted to highlight "positive remarks" from some Arab foreign ministers who did not dismiss the peace plan out of hand in speeches before the unanimous vote to totally reject the proposal.

"It is important ... to come out with a constructive stance, a realistic stance and a positive strategy that goes beyond just condemnation," UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash said, according to Riyadh-based *Arab News*.

Nonetheless, the Arab League, a pan-Arab bloc of 22 countries, said in its statement Saturday that it "rejects the U.S.-Israeli 'deal of the century' considering that it does not meet the minimum rights and aspirations of Palestinian people."

Arab leaders also vowed not to co-operate with the U.S. administration to implement this plan.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas shows his defiance in a speech in Ramallah on Jan. 28.
FLASH90 PHOTO

The League warned that Israel must not act on the plan unilaterally – a reference to Israel's stated intention to move on annexation as soon as possible.

The U.S. proposal would grant the Palestinians a state with restricted sovereignty in Gaza and in parts of the West Bank, while allowing Israel to annex all its settlements and keep nearly all of east Jerusalem.

The Palestinians would control scattered chunks of the West Bank and some neighbourhoods on the outskirts of Jerusalem, all linked together by a new network of roads, bridges and tunnels. Israel would control the state's borders and airspace and maintain overall security authority. Critics of the plan say this would rob Palestinian statehood of any meaning.

Immediately after, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pledged to bring the issue for a vote in the cabinet on Sunday, but has since backtracked after the U.S. administration indicated that while it does not oppose annexation, it was not ready to see it happen until at least after the coming Israeli elections on March 2.

After initial mixed messages, senior White House adviser Jared Kushner clarified on Jan. 30 that the U.S. would not approve of Israeli annexation efforts before the March election.

Reports on major Israeli television networks on Saturday said CIA director Gina Haspel had secretly visited Ramallah in recent days and met with Palestinian officials.

Channel 12 news reported that Haspel assured them Washington would seek to prevent Israel from annexing West Bank land before the March 2 election, as Netanyahu has indicated he would like to do.

According to Kan TV, Palestinian officials told Haspel they would not cut security ties with U.S. agencies. The network also reported that Haspel met with Israeli officials during her visit but did not provide further details.

There was no official confirmation of Haspel's visit from Israel, the U.S. or the PA.

Israel's Channel 13 on Saturday reported White House officials were surprised by the unanimous rejection of the plan by the Arab League, as several Arab nations had initially voiced cautious support for the proposal.

Oman, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Egypt and Morocco all issued statements following the release of the plan calling it a welcoming step. But on Saturday all backed the Arab League rejection.

An unnamed Arab diplomat told the *Haaretz* daily that the U.S. had not fully briefed envoys from Bahrain, the UAE and Oman on the details of the plan before they agreed to attend its unveiling ceremony on Jan. 28.

The disappointment with the details of the plan led the three countries to join the other Arab League member states in voting to reject the plan, he said.

The proposal unveiled Jan. 28 by Trump at the White House recognizes Israel's rights to the Jordan Valley, all West Bank settlements and their surroundings – some 30 per cent of the West Bank in total.

Channel 12 reported Saturday that Washington wants Israel to accept the plan in its entirety before it goes ahead with any annexation push – a possibly difficult request, given much of the Israeli right's refusal to accept the notion of a Palestinian state, no matter how small and non-contiguous it might be.

Nonetheless, the network reported that Netanyahu is planning on bringing the plan before the cabinet soon for a symbolic vote.

On Friday, Jan. 31, the network reported that Netanyahu was eager to secure backing for a symbolic "mini annexation" in the coming days to appease his right-wing voters after his plans to quickly annex the Jordan Valley and West Bank Jewish settlements were stymied by U.S. opposition. ■

Times of Israel / Timesofisrael.com

Can it be the Palestinians who will emerge victorious?

CONTINUED FROM THE PREVIOUS PAGE

The issue here is not only the matter of growing international condemnation of what will be regarded as Israel's ongoing rule over the Palestinians, especially if and when the American political spectrum swings again. It is also, most critically, about the gradual elimination of any prospect of a negotiated, viable two-state deal with the Palestinians – an accord that would enable Israel to separate from the Palestinians and thus maintain both its Jewish majority and its democratic character.

The dovish Israeli columnist Nahum Barnea described the Trump plan as "a Medea's gift" that spells nothing less than "the end of Zionism." The thoroughly mainstream Gen. (ret) Amos Gilad, who for years directed policy at the Defence Ministry, said the provisions of the plan mean the Palestinians "simply won't talk to us... It is 100 per cent certain that there will be no interaction with them, no discussions with them." The plan's provisions for annexation, meanwhile, he said, risk turning us "into a single state with two peoples, with far-reaching implications for the character of the State of Israel."

Could it be, therefore, that this supposed unprecedentedly pro-Israel plan – this vision unveiled by a pro-Israel U.S. president; opposed by all the usual Israel-haters, from Iran to Turkey's President Erdogan to Hamas; castigated by all the familiar Trump-opposing Israel-bashers, from Bernie Sanders to Elizabeth Warren to Jimmy Carter – actually adds up to the very opposite?

Abbas's late and unlamented predecessor Yasser Arafat never recognized an imperative to come to terms with Israel and legitimize it as a Jewish state because he was confident that the Palestinians would prevail over Israel by sheer weight of numbers. Wait long enough, and don't compromise on territorial demands, he determined, and eventually the Jews will constitute a minority between the river and sea.

Arafat, and Abbas after him, indeed proved resolutely unbending. And Israel, encouraging settlement expansion – even in mainly Palestinian-populated areas that, until last week, it consensually anticipated relinquishing under any future accord – deepened its entanglement with the Palestinians.

Now the U.S. peace plan has ostensibly punished the Palestinians for their obduracy, and rewarded the Israelis by recognizing their rights to further portions of this biblically resonant territory.

But what if it is the Palestinians, having rejected decades of Israeli land-for-peace overtures, who actually emerge as the victors? And what if it is Israel – entrenched among those intransigent Palestinians in a single, friction-filled entity, its democracy compromised, its Jewish majority erased – that loses its very essence? ■

Times of Israel / Timesofisrael.com

Analysis

How did Netanyahu walk into an annexation trap?

Shalom Yerushalmi
JERUSALEM

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will have had many long hours for contemplation during his flight Monday to Uganda.

How did it come to pass, the prime minister will likely have agonized, that he could deliver such a climactic crescendo in Washington, only to awkwardly stumble days later?

Why did he vow so publicly that he would immediately start to apply Israeli sovereignty to the Jordan Valley and all settlements in Judea and Samaria in a cabinet meeting that was supposed to have taken place on Sunday, only to have to swallow the bitter pill and cancel that meeting, because he could offer no annexation plan for the ministers to vote on – and couldn't even be sure he had a majority among ministers from his own Likud party?

How did so much optimism turn to such bitter disappointment for the right?

Just last week, he was sitting in Blair House with all the heads of the Yesha Council, the umbrella advocacy group for West Bank settlements, who had come to Washington to support him. He convinced the settlers that this was the best plan for everyone.

And now the chairman of the Yesha Council, David Elhayani, says the entire plan – which Netanyahu has worked on with the Americans for three long years and which was supposed to get Likud voters out to the ballot stations and grant him a decisive victory in the elections – is actually *kalam fadi*, or "empty words" in Arabic, and should be "thrown in the trash." No less.

What's a prime minister to do? The only option left that could rescue Netanyahu from his self-made nosedive with the right and the settlers, and rescue his election prospects, is to annex something.

It is hard to overstate the melancholy on the ideological right. The rhetorical spectrum runs from "despair" and "disappointment" to "lies" and "deception." Netanyahu is hearing these mutterings in Likud as well.

No one is speaking openly yet, because no one wants to confront the prime minister, who is still the unassailable king inside Likud.

But privately, no one understands how Netanyahu ended up failing so spectacularly: how, despite his intimate working relationship with President Donald Trump and the U.S. administration, and despite his promises of annexation, he is now in a desperate search for some half-decent strip of territory to which he can apply Israeli law before election day on March 2 – because the alternative would constitute one of the more resounding political farces in Likud history.

U.S. Vice-President Mike Pence with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem, on Jan. 23. MATTY STERN/U.S. EMBASSY PHOTO

Netanyahu will likely have done some introspection on the flight to Uganda – and also some political calculus. What does he do now? He could bring the "deal of the century" to the cabinet and try to squeeze it through with a majority vote, but that would require enormous efforts on his part to pressure and cajole ministers from his own Likud party. They're all spooked by the Palestinian state that lies on the other side of the equation put forward by Trump and Jared Kushner.

Ironically, Netanyahu's fall this time came in the very area that is usually his greatest strength: marketing. All his explanations and protestations that the Palestinian state contained in the plan is merely "limited and conditional sovereignty" that is unlikely ever to coalesce into a state aren't convincing his fellow Likud members. His many years of demonizing the very idea of a Palestinian state are now coming back to haunt him. No minister wants to see this "state" acquire 70 per cent of Judea and Samaria, with Israeli enclaves inside it.

"This plan is bad for Israel," one Likud minister told the *Times of Israel's* Hebrew-language sister site *Zman Israel* on Sunday. "It has anti-rightist paradigms – this Palestinian state, the tunnel connecting Gaza [to the West Bank], the territory in the Negev [annexed to the Palestinian state], the capital in east Jerusalem.

"You're talking to me about handing the neighbourhoods in Jerusalem beyond the security fence to a Palestinian state? What is that? Take Shuafat – it lies between French Hill and Pisgat Ze'ev. What do we want to happen there? We want rockets on those two neighbourhoods? That's worse than the shooting at Gilo during the Second Intifada. It's much closer."

Netanyahu may be able to pass the plan through the cabinet with the help of the ultra-Orthodox parties and some of the moderate Likud ministers. A quick calculation would put the group of possible supporters at 14 votes out of the 25 cabinet ministers in the current caretaker government. But the very fact that he would face vocal opposition in his own cabinet, from his own party members, would render the exercise politically useless. So he has given up on forcing such a vote.

The key figure in these calculations is Foreign Minister Israel Katz, who is still considered a close ally of Netanyahu. Katz opposes the plan and will vote against it if it comes up in the cabinet. That alone ensures that no other major Likud figure looking to position themselves as a future heir to Netanyahu can afford to face the next Likud primaries with the stain of having voted in favour of a Palestinian state in the heart of the country – no matter how comically limited that state would be.

It's been clear since Netanyahu's jaunt to Moscow last Thursday after the spectacle in Washington that he has stumbled into an impossible situation. On Sunday evening, he showed up at a big family event for MK Miki Zohar, spoke for three minutes and then fled the scene. Anyone who spoke with the hundreds of Likud members who packed the event hall at the Doria compound east of Ashkelon heard the Trump plan referred to as "diplomatic sabotage." And Israelis' confusion is only growing.

One of the questions that has most vexed the disappointed Likud ministers in the days since Netanyahu promised them that annexation would begin this week concerns Ambassador to the U.S. Ron Dermer.

"There's something crazy going on here," one minister told *Zman Israel*. "Dermer is Kushner's best friend. They do everything together. So what happened here? How did Kushner flip on him and on us so abruptly?"

It was, after all, Kushner who on Jan. 29 declared flatly that the U.S. would not support any Israeli unilateral annexation of West Bank territory until Israel has a properly functioning government after the March 2 elections – contradicting U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman, who had said the day before that there was no impediment to immediate annexation. And it was Kushner who turned the screw still further by saying over the weekend that one of the goals of the deal was to ensure that Israel not expand its settlements any further.

What's a prime minister to do? The only option left that could rescue Netanyahu from his self-made nosedive with the right and the settlers, and rescue his election prospects, is to annex something, and not just little Kfar Etzion or Oranit, but a significant stretch of land. The Americans would have to absorb the pressure from their Arab allies that would result from such a move – if only Netanyahu could be certain that even that would help.

No one is speaking openly yet, because no one wants to confront Netanyahu, who is still the unassailable king inside Likud.

Actually, "his only real hope is to convince President Trump that a significant unilateral annexation would help Trump himself in the coming U.S. presidential election," one senior Likud minister said. The political pressure will now be turned on American evangelicals.

The Israeli right believes that only they, Trump's most important base, can force the American president to greenlight a significant Israeli annexation of West Bank settlements. Evangelicals are not interested in a Palestinian state – only in a Jewish state in the land of Israel, given to the Jews by God in the Bible. Massive pressure from them, Netanyahu hopes, might force Trump's acquiescence.

"If that happens, we can argue that this is a historic moment of opportunity, and get an okay from the attorney general," the Likud minister said, referring to Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit's repeated remonstrations to ministers not to advance major policy initiatives under the current caretaker government.

"In any other situation, the attorney general would oppose annexation, and then it's all lost," the minister added, brushing his palms in a gesture of defeat. ■

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Jewish Life

THEATRE | MUSIC | BOOKS | FOOD

Jully Black plays Caroline in Caroline, Or Change. Mitchell Marcus is artistic and managing director of The Musical Stage Company

Tony Kushner musical focuses on characters

RUTH SCHWEITZER
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

The Musical Stage Company and Obsidian Theatre are reimagining their 2012 award-winning production of *Caroline, Or Change*, a musical about a black maid working for a Jewish family in 1963 Louisiana, set against the Kennedy assassination and the civil rights movement.

The show, now running at Toronto's Winter Garden Theatre, is autobiographical, with book and lyrics by Tony Kushner, who was raised in Lake Charles, La.

The musical's main character is Caroline, a single mother of four children, who finds her weekly salary of $30 inadequate. To help her, her employer suggests she keep the pocket change she finds in the family's laundry, which creates a moral dilemma for Caroline.

In *Caroline, Or Change*, Kushner created complex characters who, according to one critic, seem to have sprung fully formed from the pages of the script. "So many musicals just skim the surface of character. *Caroline, Or Change* is one of those rare examples of musicals that don't settle for surface," said Mitchell Marcus, the founder and artistic and managing director of The Musical Stage Company.

"Rather than having huge tap-dance sequences and power ballads, it's a musical that really takes its time to go deep into these people, to really explore the detail and the nuance of what it's like to be that character."

The role of Caroline, played by Juno award-winning R&B singer Jully Black, is considered one of the most powerful roles in musical theatre. "Caroline isn't a perspective that we hear all that often, at least certainly in the theatre," Marcus said.

"She is a black maid who spends her day in the basement, doing laundry. She doesn't want things to change. She's not a hero in a traditional sense. It's quite a herculean role for anyone to take on."

The relationship between Caroline and Noah (Evan LeFeuvre), the Gellman family's eight-year-old son, who has recently lost his mother to cancer, is central to the show.

The score, composed by Jeanine Tesori, includes blues, R&B, gospel, classical music and traditional Jewish melodies. "When the family has a Hanukkah party, it's original music, but it's pulling from klezmer and traditional Hanukkah songs," Marcus said.

Tesori gives each character their own musical voice, and she's included different styles of music in the score, attributing them to different characters. In Caroline's basement, for example, the washer sounds like Aretha Franklin, the dryer sounds like James Brown and the music coming from the radio sounds like the Supremes.

The Musical Stage Company and Obsidian Theatre's 2012 production of *Caroline, Or Change*, won four Dora awards and three Toronto Theatre Critics Awards.

Caroline, Or Change has within it a message for our time, more than it did in 2012, Marcus said. "It's such a complicated time in the world right now. Everything feels so divisive. I think everyone really has this feeling of the need for change, something is going to give, and in that regard I think there's really a lot in common with 1963," he said.

"And the characters in this piece are really struggling with the question of how do you make change happen when it feels impossible."

Marcus believes that musicals are uniquely positioned to change the world. "When someone sings, I feel like I have private access to what's happening inside them. Naturally, by experiencing that, you're feeling a sense of empathy," he said, which allows you to put yourself in someone else's shoes.

"An intelligent, thought-provoking musical allows an audience member to spend a couple of hours really feeling viscerally somebody else's circumstances and that has a tremendous power to open up minds and open up hearts and perhaps make some change in the world." ■

Caroline, Or Change runs at the Winter Garden Theatre in Toronto until February 15. For tickets, visit musicalstagecompany.com.

THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
FEBRUARY 6, 2020

Documentary explores doctor's contribution to women's health care

STEVE ARNOLD
SPECIAL TO THE CJN, HAMILTON, ONT

May Cohen is famous among Canadian doctors for her 40-year campaign to improve women's health care in this country.

She is almost unknown, however, to the general public and the generations of women whose lives have been improved through her care and other efforts.

A new documentary film on the doctor's life and work will make another small step in changing that when it is screened in March by the Toronto Jewish Film Society. It was shown in October as part of the celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of McMaster University's medical school.

"May Cohen is pretty well known in medical circles and with women who have been involved with women's rights and reproductive campaigns," said Dr. Cheryl Levitt, director of the documentary *The Gender Lady: The Fabulous Dr. May Cohen*. She is also on the medical school faculty at McMaster

"She has been inducted into the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame and there are eight national medical awards given in her name," Levitt added. "It's amazing there are all these awards in her name, yet she is invisible."

Born in Montreal, Cohen graduated at the top of her class from the University of Toronto medical school in 1955, an era when fewer than seven per cent of medical students in Canada were women. After 20 years of family practice in Toronto with her husband Gerry, Cohen joined McMaster's department of family medicine in 1977. When she retired in 1997 she was an associate dean of the school and founding chair of the women's health office.

For Levitt, those bare facts are only the surface of a story that covers an important era of Canadian medical history.

May Cohen has been inducted into the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame.

"There has been a whole cadre of women family physicians who have been involved in the women's liberation movement and bringing about equal health care for women and addressing women's reproductive rights, but May was unique because she was able to move it along in the halls of traditional medicine and people listened to her," Levitt said. "She was able to establish changes in the profession that others had not been able to do."

Interviews with Cohen's friends, family and colleagues revealed the story of a woman shaped by many forces that allowed her to challenge traditional ideas.

Her parents were both committed Communists in the era before and after the Second World War when such ideas were considered dangerous. The home they created, however, was filled with talk of social justice and the need for changes in society.

During her days as a family doctor, Cohen squarely faced the question of abortion arguing, along with Dr. Henry Morgentaler, that women had a right to control their own fertility. Those were the days when hospitals had to form abortion clinic to decide which women would be allowed to end unwanted pregnancies.

Through that work, Cohen got to know a breed of humanist physicians who were pushing for a new kind of medical education in Canada.

"Things started happening in the medical profession and it was because May and the people helping her were pushing," Levitt said.

Levitt's film, produced with long-time friend and Western University medical professor Barbara Lent, was edited by Mary Kainer, with Zoe Dirse and Sharon Hampson as executive producers.

Hampson, best known as part of the Sharon, Lois and Bram children's entertainment team, is a long-time friend and patient of Cohen. In the film she says of Cohen, "She did what she needed to do, it was right and she changed the world."

Cohen, who first saw the film in a private screening, said she initially had "mixed feelings" about it but retains "great gratitude to those who worked so hard on it."

"When I graduated there was no such thing as women's health, but now we know that it is more than just obstetrics and gynecology," she said. "There is a clear recognition of the need today."

The movie had its world premiere at the Toronto Jewish Film Festival earlier this year. It was financed, Levitt said, "on a shoestring" of small grants from McMaster University, the Federation of Medical Women and other sources. ■

The Gender Lady *will be shown March 15 at 3 p.m., Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema, 506 Bloor St. W. Tickets at Eventbrite.ca.*

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David Broza gives his love of guitars to kids

RUTH SCHWEITZER
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

David Broza

Like most guitarists, Israeli singer and songwriter David Broza has a strong connection with his instrument.

"There's nowhere I go without the guitar," Broza, who's been playing guitar since he was 12, said. "It's a nylon string Spanish guitar and it serves me in every way an instrument can serve, in times of pain, in times of happiness, in times of boredom. In public and in private, my life is always around the guitar," Broza said.

His fascination with the guitar is one reason why One Million Guitars, a philanthropic project he co-founded in 2019, means so much him, he said.

The project has so far distributed guitars Broza designed to lower-income students in grades 4 to 6 in 43 U.S. states and in Israel. "We give it to the classes and the kids get a two-year course, and if they stick to it, the guitar becomes theirs for life," he said.

He hopes some of the children will develop a special relationship with the guitar. "Once you have the guitar, truthfully, you can deal with almost anything in life," he said.

One Million Guitars came out of Broza's work in east Jerusalem and in Palestinian refugee camps, where he gave music lessons to children.

Broza, who recently performed at the Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts, is a world-class guitarist who has perfected his own style, a fusion of flamenco-flavoured rhythmic and percussive techniques with some whirlwind fingerpicking.

Broza shot to stardom in Israel, with the release of "Yihye Tov" ("Things Will Get Better"), during the Arab-Israeli peace talks between Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin in 1977.

Broza, who has released some 28 albums since, never planned to become a musician. He spent some of his teen years in Spain, where he sold paintings in the Rastro, Madrid's Sunday flea market. After his Israeli military service, he was considering becoming a graphic artist.

But, then he got an offer to play as a sideman in a show with the Israeli poet Yehonatan Geffen, and he's never looked back.

"On that show, Yehonatan gave me a poem, so that I could write music to it. I wrote music to it, so it became my first hit, "Yihye Tov." I wrote another song – he gave me the lyrics – and it became a hit," Broza said.

"I had beginners' luck writing songs that became successful, and before I knew it, there was not even a question of what I should do with my life."

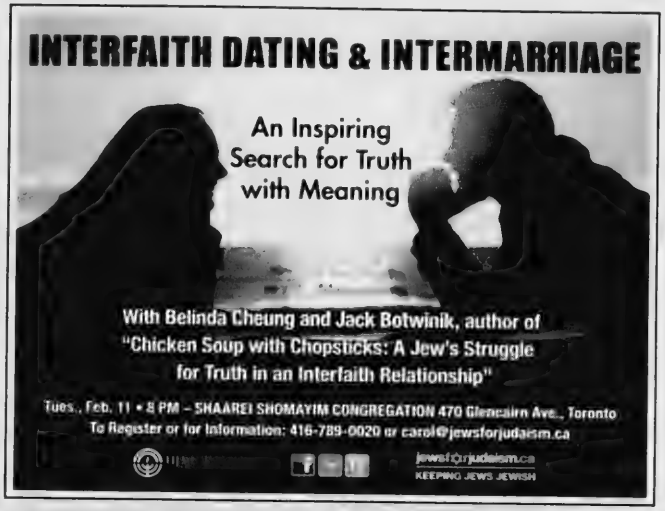
Forty-three years after the release of "Yihye Tov," Broza is an optimist who believes peace will prevail in the Middle East. "If you ask any Israeli, whether they're from the right or the left, we all want peace. The question is, are people willing to actually negotiate peace? Even though times seem to be dark, I always believe it's part of the process. Like the (old bluegrass gospel) song says: the darkest hour is just before the dawn," he said.

Broza is a peace activist who was mentored by another prominent Israeli peace activist, his grandfather Wellesley Aron, a co-founder of the Arab-Israeli peace village Neve Shalom. "He turned that place into reality, and I dare say it's probably the most important living and working environment on the issues of co-existence and tolerance and conflict resolution in the world," Broza said.

He has no patience with the prominent intellectuals and entertainers who boycott Israel for political reasons. "To me, it's the most cowardly way of dealing with something. You want to deal with something, you have something to say to Israeli people and Palestinian people, go to Israel, perform, use your stage to (convey) your message," he said.

"No one will say anything. It might cause a few boos and some will say hurrah. To boycott, is that how people resolve a situation? I think you do it by dialogue." ■

Visit www.onemillionguitars.org.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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
FEBRUARY 6, 2020

Author paints different views of a city in trouble

NORMAN RAVVIN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Paris' Rue des Rosiers is in the news of late, but for reasons more benign than its purpose at the heart of Rhea Tregebov's new novel, which bears its name. Like the rest of the Marais, a Jewish hub since the medieval period, Rue des Rosiers is under pressure by a familiar global phenomenon: gentrification. Increasingly, it is too expensive for anyone other than an international chain to afford to do business on its tourist-clogged blocks

In Tregebov's novel, Rue des Rosiers is the site of a terrorist attack that took place at Goldenberg's Deli in 1982, which left six dead, many injured, and presented a template to be copied by the perpetrators of more recent massacres of Jews or political targets, such as the cartoonists of the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*.

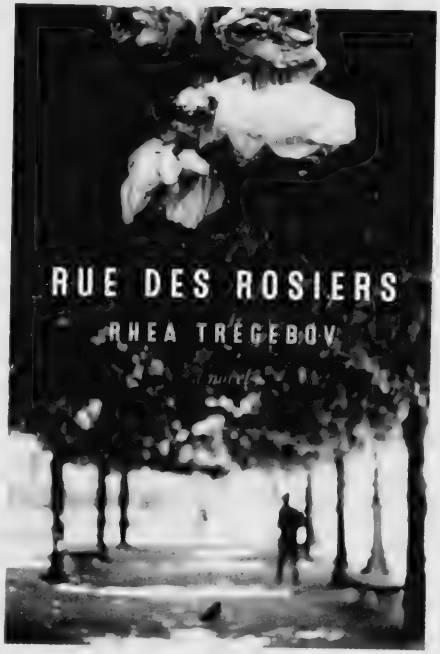
Rue des Rosiers opens before the 1982 attack, and, in shadowy ways, its readers can guess from the beginning that a disaster looms over the novel's main characters. But Tregebov does an impressive job of moving backwards in time to place her main character, a young Torontonian called Sarah, at unknowing remove from events that lurk, unseen in her future.

Toronto readers in particular will appreciate Tregebov's rendering of the city in its early 80s guise, from the point of view of women's activist groups on Queen Street, to the experience of spartan rented rooms on a down-at-the-heels Palmerston Boulevard.

We meet Sarah at a low point. She has a knack for landscape design but works at a garden centre where dedication is not necessarily rewarded. Her relationship to Michael, a young lawyer, is similarly tentative. For reasons she can't quite explain to herself, she prefers to abandon her partner asleep in his bed to walk the nighttime Annex streets to reach her own bed on Palmerston.

The sudden loss of her job and the coincidence of Michael's firm's needs in Paris allow them to break with routine. The book shifts from its Canadian to its Parisian setting.

The latter half of *Rue des Rosiers* contains a wholehearted literary love letter to the French city.



> "Toronto readers in particular will appreciate Tregebov's rendering of the city"

Rue des Rosiers
by Rhea Tregebov
Coteau Books

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Sarah is the proverbial free woman in Paris, "unfettered and alive," as the Joni Mitchell song has it. All the limitations and frustrations of her Toronto existence fall away as she has the opportunity to explore and make the most of her time abroad. A garden specialist tours her through the Luxembourg Gardens, where she takes the measure not only of the park's design but studies the customs of Parisian leisure.

On her own, she seeks out the architectural treasures of the city, a pursuit which allow Tregebov, via Sarah's inquisitive gaze, to present carefully detailed descriptions: "Place des Vosges. The heart of the heart of Paris. So much light. The square is big, much bigger than she remembered it. It's early Saturday morning, so in the strict geometry of the place with its circles and squares, its precision gardening, there's almost no one. The square is a perfect square, a model of symmetry, the same arcade running along all four sides, paths in perfect diagonals across the inner square. Lines drawn to let people in, not just keep them out. A space that can belong, at least temporarily, to anyone passing through: cleaning ladies, maids, the men in their bright green uniforms sweeping the streets with their sad brooms."

Sarah's freewheeling outings are interrupted by her recognition, one morning, of a new graffiti over a subway passage: "The words stop her. . . . Mort aux juifs. Then the English comes to her: Death to the Jews."

Though Sarah does not witness the act of their writing, the reader does. And so too does Laila, a young newcomer from the Middle East who becomes a kind of secret sharer to Sarah. Through Laila, Tregebov offers another view of Paris. It's through her that we recognize the city's cultural and economic divides, as well as the ways in which North Africans and Arabs have changed the city's character.

Tregebov's first novel, *The Knife Sharpener's Bell*, linked Winnipeggers with Ukraine. In Rue des Rosiers her past work as a poet contributes to the evocative rendering of charmingly mundane Toronto streets in contrast with Paris' touristic sheen.

Rue des Rosiers moves expertly toward a dark denouement, but Tregebov leaves room for a kind of rapprochement between her two very different female characters. ■

Norman Ravvin is a writer and teacher in Montreal. His new novel, set in Poland and Vancouver, is The Girl Who Stole Everything.

Author documents history of Key West's Jews

MELODY WREN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN, KEY WEST, FLA

Arlo Haskell's *The Jews of Key West: Smugglers, Cigar Makers and Revolutionaries* (Sand Paper Press) illustrates an unexpected perspective of the southern, hurricane-magnet city in covering its 195-year-old Jewish community.

Haskell is the executive director of the annual Key West Literary Seminar. Not a historian, but a writer, administrator and poet, he has transformed dense research from diverse sources into an easy-to-read history and tribute. He was encouraged to tackle this project by Susan Ochroch Savitch, a fellow Key West resident, who had collected and provided Haskell with a large assortment of material. His book covers much of the almost-lost history of Key West's Jewish population, from the town's founding through its postwar boom.

Arlo Haskell

How did the book come about?

Susan Ochroch Savitch started the project. She split her time for 30 years between New York and Key West – she was fascinated by the history of the place and more so from the Jewish families she met through the synagogue. She had permission to document their stories, and had oral histories, a lot of photographs, documents and notes from conversations, and had gathered and made copies from the Jewish Museum of Miami, and Key West archives. She wasn't going to take it that far but wanted it to continue, so she commissioned me to write the book. It took seven years – the deeper I got, the more questions came up.

We associate other areas of Florida and the U.S. with Jewish communities, but not Key West. Are you surprised that no one has written about this before?

Yes and no. No one has done this before because the information was so scattered, as Susan found. There were pieces in Key West, Miami, Harvard, the National Library of Havana,and Charleston, S.C. Ten years ago you would have needed assistants and a huge travel budget, but over that time period much more information was put online. Because it was all digitized, it was researchable, but the pace of scanning of historic documents was quite slow. That actually helped me because periods of feeling overwhelmed were interspersed with periods of understanding. Things settle in a different way over the course of a few years.

Did you come across fun facts in your research?

People underestimate the history of Key West as it has been a thriving place since 50 or 60 years before Miami existed. In the days when it was accessible only by boat, it traded with Charleston, Savannah, Ga., Havana, New York, and Galveston, Texas and New Orleans. Key West was not an isolated outpost but a cosmopolitan trade hub.

So it comes as no surprise that Key West had the first synagogue in South Florida as well as the first Jewish community. It was a surprise to find that the Jewish community in Key West had strong ties with a flourishing community in Cuba, a short 145 kilometres away. We don't associate Cuba with having their own Jewish community, but Cuba's independence was attractive to Jews, and their history on the island is well documented in Spanish, in 27 volumes, which are now all digitized and translated on the University of Havana 's server.

It seems like there are several important developments through the history including the Great Key West Fire of 1886. Can you expand on that?

The fire destroyed a huge chunk of Key West and a big wave of Jewish immigration followed that fire, including many peddlers who saw the business opportunity. They had been in Savannah and Charleston. The commercially active hub in Key West suddenly had no inventory, so the peddlers followed the existing shipping channels, bringing goods. It was a golden economic opportunity that allowed them to save up and eventually buy their own stores.

How tolerant was Key West for the incoming Jewish immigrants initially?

At the time when the first wave came in the late 1880s, Key West was living through a wonderful period - very cosmopolitan, and diverse and welcoming to people from all places. Key West was filled with either Cuban born or of Cuban parentage. Stores often posted their wares in Spanish and English. Jews, who were originally from Poland, Russia and Romania, were accepted into this community, especially once they became established as merchants. They established schools, clubs, Jewish religious congregations including the present B'nai Zion. There was one Jewish newspaper in circulation.

But the city did crack down on peddling, by enacting a licensing fee of US$1,000.

The 1889 yellow fever epidemic seemed to be key to the evolution of the community. I understand that when it went through the Key West Jewish community, they were blamed as the cause?

The health inspector for the State of Florida did spend time and extra attention investigating Jewish households, and did have racial theories about the spread of yellow fever. He believed that black people couldn't get yellow fever and that Jews and others were more susceptible. He and his officers went into the home of one specific couple, and removed all of the bedding, mattresses and clothing and burned all of it and fumigated the house.

Where can Jewish visitors go in Key West to get the essence of Jewish history and culture there?

The Jewish section of the cemetery in 1891 has many names from that wave of Jewish settlers in the 1880s, and 1890s with the earliest grave in 1891. The restaurant called Sarabeth's is on the site of the first official synagogue and Jewish travellers like to seek it out. I hope to see plaques commemorating certain places for Jewish people to visit. I am now very attuned to neighbourhoods in granular detail. For example, the book documents details of the Jewish history of the 700 block on Duval Street. It has been added to some of the walking tours available. Mam's Best Food kosher restaurant is also recommended to visit.

What surprises did you discover during your research?

I was surprised to come across the Jewish support for the Cuban Revolution, which was one of the stories in Susan's research that I thought was exaggerated. It was quite widespread, but was kept secret.

The story of the birth of the cigar industry in Key West was also fascinating. With Cuban help, it was the leading industry started by Jewish manufacturers, and was a major industry from the 1860s to the 1890s. There were one million hand-rolled cigars made annually. A handful of Jewish manufacturers moved the industry to Key West and moved skilled labourers over. It was the first large scale-industry here and cornered the market. That story gets told as a Cuban story, but it's really rooted in the Jewish manufacturers who took over part of a Cuban dominated industry.

How much influence does that Jewish history have on today's Key West?

That period, the cosmopolitan diverse open mindedness that Jews found so welcoming and hospitable was welcoming to other immigrants. That period of time was where Key West's heart is today. "One human family" is the motto of Key West.

Later, when Hitler was rising in power, Jewish immigration quotas to the U.S. were reduced by 90 per cent. The Jewish community in Key West actively resisted those laws, and smuggled European Jews into Cuba and into Key West. That spirit of independence is referenced by a quotation in the book, "My grandfather was a law abiding citizen but in bringing people to safety there was a higher God in play."

Key West is full of rich and often-surprising history, but it's not always apparent on the surface. As with its impeccably restored old homes, you often have to peel back a few layers of paint to know what really happened. Whether you're Jewish or not, the more you can read about Key West's history before arriving, the closer you'll come to the "real" Key West, and the more you'll understand why this place means so much to so many people. ■

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A Tu b'Shevat seder

SYBIL KAPLAN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Tu b'Shevat, the 15th of Shevat, which begins at sunset on Feb. 9, is called the holiday of the trees and the holiday of fruit. It is also called *Chamisha asar b'Shevat*, the 15th of Shevat. The *Tu* comes from the Hebrew letters, *tet vav*, which add up to 15.

Beginning at the end of the 17th century, eating fruit became a custom associated with Tu b'Shevat, frequently the *sheva minim*, the seven species mentioned in Deuteronomy grown in Israel - wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates.

Here are some recipes to help you celebrate. ■

Date Nut Carob Torte

- 250 ml (1 cup) chopped dates
- 250 ml (1 cup) ground nuts
- 50 ml (¼ cup) carob powder
- 4 separated eggs
- 2 ml (¼ tsp) cream of tartar

Preheat oven to 190 C (375 F). Grease a 23-cm (9-inch) cake pan.

In a mixing bowl, toss dates and nuts with carob powder.

Separate eggs, adding yolks to mixing bowl. Place whites in a separate bowl and beat with cream of tartar until they hold stiff peaks.

Add to date-nuts-carob powder - egg yolks mixture and blend.

Spoon into greased cake pan and bake for 15-25 minutes. Test every 5 minutes with pick inserted into center until it comes out clean.

Makes four servings.

Baked Figs

- 24 dried figs with a horizontal slit part of the way in each fig
- Peel of 2 oranges, cut in strips
- 250 ml (1 cup) almonds
- 250 ml (1 cup) sweet wine

Preheat oven to 180 C (375 F).

Stuff each fig with 1 piece orange zest and 1 almond. Pack into a small baking dish that will hold them tightly in one layer.

Pour wine over figs. Place another glass baking on top to weigh them down and to get the figs flat and covered in wine. Place first baking dish into a second dish and bake for 20 minutes.

Makes eight servings.

Easy Almond Cake

- 250 ml (1 cup) flour
- 2 ml (½ tsp) baking soda
- 50 ml (¼ cup) soft margarine or 45 ml (3 tbsp) vegetable oil
- 250 ml (1 cup) sugar
- 5 ml (1 tsp) almond extract
- 2 eggs
- 50 ml (¼ cup) buttermilk, yogurt or non-dairy creamer
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) finely sliced almonds

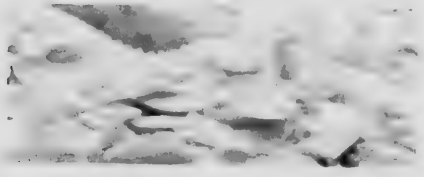
Preheat oven to 180 C (350 F). Grease a 23-cm (9-inch) cake pan or a square pan.

Stir together flour and baking soda.

In a mixer, beat margarine or oil, sugar, almond extract and eggs. Stir in flour mixture alternately with buttermilk, yogurt or non-dairy creamer and blend.

Pour into greased bake pan. Sprinkle top with almonds. Bake for 25-30 minutes or until a pick inserted into the center comes out clean.

Makes eight servings.



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Parashah

Beshalach | Exodus 13:17-17:16

Rabbi Julia Appel investigates the life of Serah bat Asher
Yael Abramovitch studies Pharaoh and the concept of free will
Rabbi Yoseph Y. Zaltzman compares the challenges of Egypt and Amalek

Rabbi Julia Appel

As we know, when Pharoah finally let the Israelites go, they lacked time for their dough to rise. But curiously, we find in our parashah that "Moses took Joseph's bones with him, for [Joseph] had adjured b'nei Israel, saying, God will surely remember you, and you shall bring up my bones from here with you" (Ex. 13:19).

After 430 years, the Jews come back for Joseph to bring him home. How did anyone remember where Joseph was buried after so long? The *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael* elaborates: It was Serah bat Asher who showed Moses the way.

Serah bat Asher is named in the Torah both in the list going down to Egypt and in the list standing at Moab after the Exodus - a span of 500 years! She becomes in the midrash a character of wisdom and ancient secrets: the secret of redemption was given to Abraham, passed on through the patriarchs until Joseph, who told it to his brothers. Asher told Serah. When all those generations later Moses arose, it was Serah who could recognize whether he was the true redeemer or not.

Leaving Egypt, Serah tells Moses that the Egyptians buried Joseph in a metal coffin at the bottom of the Nile. Moses writes the name of God on gold and throws it in the Nile, conjuring Joseph and his coffin by evoking God's promise of redemption. The coffin rises, and Moses brings it with them - the *Mekhilta* later says Joseph's bones are carried even beside the Ark of the Covenant.

From earliest times, we Jews have known what it is to be separated from our history, our people, our places. To be buried far from home. To not remember where we've put our most valuable things, lost to the generations. Yet among us are the secret keepers, the wisdom holders. Like Serah bat Asher, we must listen to their stories, to hear where we come from. Sometimes they can also point us where we are going - toward redemption. Who are yours? ■

Rabbi Julia Appel is the senior Jewish educator and campus rabbi at the University of Toronto Hillel.

Yael Abramovitch

In Parshat Beshalach we read about a famous ethical discussion, how ha-Shem hardened Pharaoh's heart. There are a number of possible explanations related to this concept, including that ha-Shem was punishing Pharaoh for being so awful to the Jews, ha-Shem was doing this to show Himself to the world and lastly, Pharaoh did have free will.

Firstly, the hardening of Pharaoh's heart was a punishment for Pharaoh because of his evil actions towards the Jewish people. He didn't let them go after many times that Moshe came asking and warning him. From Rashi's commentary, based off the Midrash Tachuna, Pharaoh received five opportunities to repent for his sins during the first five plagues, which he chose not to.

Secondly, ha-Shem is showing Himself as the only God to the world and the Jewish people. It may seem that ha-Shem had bad intentions for hardening Pharaoh's heart, but we learn that He didn't. There is a *pasuk* that helps us understand ha-Shem's actions:

"But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in Egypt, he will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and with mighty acts of judgment I will bring out my people the Israelites."

We read that ha-Shem knows Pharaoh won't let the Jews go, so ha-Shem uses this opportunity to show Himself as the powerful God that He is.

Lastly, we can learn from this concept that Pharaoh did in fact have free will. Rashi comments on this topic that Pharaoh's heart did not actually harden, rather ha-Shem stripped him of his free will, causing Pharaoh to become more stubborn.

In conclusion, a lot can be learned from Parashah Beshalach regarding free will. An important lesson we can learn from Pharaoh's ways is that when people reach a certain point of evil, they cannot easily return to being good again.

Shabbat shalom! ■

Yael Abramovitch is a Grade 11 student at Ulpanat Orot, part of Bnei Akiva Schools of Toronto.

Rabbi Yoseph Y. Zaltzman

Upon being liberated from Egypt, the Israelites faced two enemies. First, the Egyptians, who pursued and trapped them at the Sea of Reeds. Then, following the crossing of the sea, the Israelites were ambushed by Amalek. There is a distinct difference in the way these two battles unfolded.

When it came to the Egyptians, the instruction from Moses was, "God will do battle for you, and you shall remain silent." The Israelites were to forge ahead and when they did, and the Egyptians pursued them and drowned, the Israelites experienced revelation. When it came to the battle with Amalek, on the other hand, the instruction was to select men, form an army and fight. Why the difference?

On a simple level, the Egyptians were pursuing them, and so the sensible thing to do was to keep moving. Amalek, on the other hand, confronted the Israelites and attempted to impede their advance, and so they had to be similarly confronted and removed.

Egypt represents the servitude of the mind and heart, a prison in which we don't recognize our true potential. The way to combat challenges like that is to flee from them – try to make order of them, make peace with them, but ultimately move away from them.

Amalek is different. Their modus operandi is to acknowledge all essential truths, embrace freedom, and then convince you it has nothing to do with your reality. It is the voice of doubt and cynicism that creates separation between the mind and the body, between the spiritual and the material. It's the type of challenge that follows you wherever you go. If you find it blocking your path, you have to fight it and eliminate it.

When facing a challenge, we can reflect and consider what type of challenge it is and how to deal with it. If it is a nuisance that is nagging us, then the method is to shake it off and forge ahead. If, on the other hand, it constitutes a real threat that is impeding the mission of bringing light and goodness into our lives and into the world, then we need to prepare to fight it to the end. ■

Rabbi Yoseph Y. Zaltzman is the founder and senior rabbi of the Jewish Russian Community Centre of Ontario.

Social Scene

Landon White, Leo Scher and Shea Goldenberg making tzedakah boxes

The Goldstein family

Brooklynn Cutler and Sadie Moxely

Bialik Principal Jake Gallinger

Littlest Volunteers

TORONTO

The UJA Genesis Littlest Volunteer event connected the community in a new, thoughtful and entertaining way, while providing a hands-on volunteer experience for families through a fun-filled carnival themed afternoon. Friends and partners of UJA showcased kid friendly, micro versions of their volunteer opportunities for kids to do on site, while parents learned more about how they can volunteer as a family. With over 600 guests in attendance it was an awesome day of giving back to the community. Kol HaKavod to all the Littlest Volunteers, congrats on a job well done! ■

ShinShinim Yossi Eliayahu and Reena Rosenwald

The Mandowsky family

The Erlich family

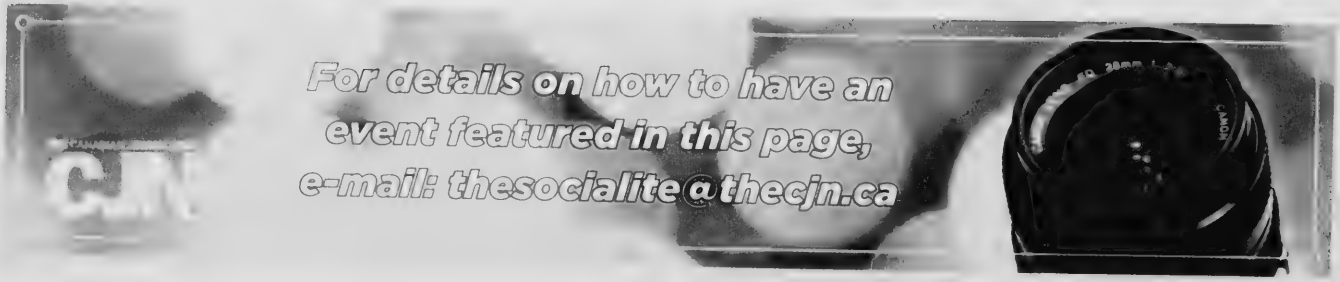
The Korenblum family

The Berens family

Regan Tessis and Shay Benadiba

Max Fagen and his passport

UJA Genesis team and Adam Minsky



What's New

FEB. 6- FEB. 13

by Lila Sarick

Thursday, Feb. 6

SHABBAT SHIRAH CONCERT
Cantor David Guber and **Reuven Grajner** perform a Shabbat Shirah concert, 7 p.m., Beth Emeth. Free

YIDDISH VINKL
Anna Shternshis discusses "Last Days of Moisei Beregovsky," noon, Free Times Cafe, 320 College St. The talk is in Yiddish. $23, includes lunch. RSVP: yiddishvinkl@yahoo.ca

Saturday, Feb. 8

SHABBAT SHIRAH
Tizmoret, an a cappella group from New York City, sings at Temple Sinai, 10 a.m.

SEPHARDIC SHABBAT
The Song Shul celebrates Shabbat Shirah with Sephardic music, 9-11:30 a.m., Bialik Hebrew Day School, 2760 Bathurst St.

Sunday, Feb. 9

A CAPPELLA MUSIC FOR YOUTH
Tizmoret, Queens College Hillel's professional a cappella group, performs at 9:30 a.m., Temple Sinai.

WHAT IS JEWISH MUSIC?
Cantor Cheryl Wunch discusses "Praylist: What is Jewish Music?" 7:30 p.m., City Shul, 300 Bloor St. W. $10 for non-members. Register at bit.ly/Praylist

ETHICS OF KOSHER SUPERVISION
Rabbis Tsvi Heber and **Mordechai Torczyner** discuss the "Ethics of Commercial Kosher Supervision," 7:30-8:45 p.m., Yeshivat Or Chaim. Free. Details: Info@torontotorah.com

Monday, Feb. 10

MITZVAH KNITTERS
Mitzvah knitters meet at Beth Tikvah Synagogue, 3080 Bayview Ave., from 1-3 p.m. Yarn, patterns supplied. Details: mitzvahknitters@gmail.com.

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS
Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner discusses "Bereavement and the Physician," 7:30-9 p.m., Shaarei Shomayim. Details: 647-234-7299 or info@torontotorah.com.

ASK DR. RUTH
Beit Halochem Canada, Aid to Disabled Veterans of Israel, screens the film, *Ask Dr. Ruth*, 6:30 p.m., Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. Tickets at bit.ly/2t3yvOc

HOLOCAUST AUTHOR
Deborah Levison, author of *The Crate: A Story of War, a Murder and Justice*, speaks at Chabad Of Markham, 7:30 p.m. Her mother, a Holocaust survivor who is the main character in the story, will also be present. To RSVP: chabadmarkham.org/thecrate.

YIDDISH CONVERSATION
Enjoy a Yiddish conversation group with Velvl, discussing the short story *My Dear Neighbour* by Sam Hoffer, 7:30 p.m., Prosserman JCC. Sponsored by Friends of Yiddish. $5/8. RSVP by Feb. 7, to: yiddish18@yahoo.ca; **Lillian** 416-783-3603.

JEWISH SECULAR HUMANISTS
Jewish Secular Humanists of Oakville meet in the evening for discussion. Contact **Elka** at ere@bell.net.

Tuesday, Feb. 11

TUESDAY STUDY GROUPS
Avrum Rosensweig of Ve'ahavta is the speaker at a Women of Adath study group breakfast at 9:30 a.m. Non-members, $10 per session. Info: **Marjorie**, 416-780-9156.
Rabbi Philip Scheim discusses immigration, 10:30 a.m., Beth David.

TUESDAYS WITH LARRY
Beth Tikvah shows the film *The Interpreter*, 1:30 p.m., $5. Each film includes an introduction and commentary by **Larry Anklewicz**.

INTERFAITH DATING AND MARRIAGE
Belinda Cheung and **Jack Botwinik**, author of *Chicken Soup with Chopsticks: A Jew's Struggle for Truth in an Interfaith Relationship*, discuss interfaith dating and intermarriage, 8 p.m. Shaarei Shomayim. Free. 416-789-0020 or carol@jewsforjudaism.ca

ISRAEL STAMP CLUB
Israel Stamp Club discusses "Aerogrammes, Stationery, Postcards and Booklets," 7 p.m. For location, call 416-226-2050.

ANTI-SEMITISM TOOLBOX
York Region Police present a workshop on "Run, Hide, Defend," and Magen David Adom discuss, "The First Seven Minutes," and what to do in the event of a mass casualty incident, 7-9 p.m., Chabad Romano, 10500 Bathurst St. Register at eventbrite.ca $10.

Wednesday, Feb. 12

JEWISH SPIRITUALITY SEMINAR
Rabbi Michael Skobac discusses "Everyday, Down to Earth Spirituality," 7:30 p.m., Village Shul. Free. RSVP: 416-789-0020, or carol@jewsforjudaism.org.

Deadline:
The deadline for the Feb. 20 paper is Feb. 10. All deadlines are at noon. Phone: 416-391-1836 ext. 269; email: **whatsnewcjn@gmail.com**.

International Holocaust Remembrance Day

Friends of Simon Weisenthal Center hosted a reception at Toronto City Hall to commemorate International Holocaust Remembrance Day. City councillors, MPs, MPPs, Holocaust survivors and Lt.-Gov. Elizabeth Dowdeswell were among those who attended.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

DANGEROUS IDEAS
Rabbi Louis Sachs discusses "Dangerous Ideas and Rabbinic Censorship," Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m. to Feb. 19. Beth Tikvah.

Thursday, Feb. 13

LUNCH AND LITERATURE
Philippa Sheppard discusses the novel *The Weight of Ink*, 1 p.m., Beth Emeth. $25.

Et Cetera

CANCER SUPPORT
Cancer support for Jewish women, including social programs, educational events and resources can be found at the L'Chaim Cancer Support Group for Jewish Women. Info: 416-630-0203, or lchaim@ncjwctoronto.org.

KIDS CLUB
Beth Tikvah's Kids Club with storytime and crafts starts Sunday Feb. 23, 10 a.m. $50 for 5 sessions. Register by Feb. 14. 416-221-3433.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED
- Baycrest is looking for volunteers, contact 416-785-2500 ext. 2572, or volunteer@baycrest.org.
- Beit Halochem, Aid to Disabled Veterans of Israel is seeking hosts to welcome veterans into their homes this spring. Details: 905-695-0611, or beithalochem.ca.

For Seniors

- **Bernard Betel Centre**, 416-225-2112. Feb. 11, **Myriam Shechter** discusses "Great Composers Writing Comedy: Puccini," 10 a.m., $4.25/$8.50; Feb. 12, Valentines Day lunch, concert and marketplace, 10 a.m.- 2 p.m. Lunch and concert, $20/$25.; Feb. 13, wellness lecture on "Environmental Health," 1:30 p.m., free.
- **Holy Blossom. Rhonda Silver** and **George Bartosik** perform Feb. 10. Program includes exercise and lunch. 10 a.m.-1 p.m., $3/$5.
- **Earl Bales Seniors Club 65+ In the Park.** The club has reopened after renovations, featuring social and partners bridge, gentle exercise and meditation, knitting circles and more. Contact **Valerie**, 416-395-7881.

Jewish Family & Child

Groups are open to all members of the community. A sliding scale is offered for those who need fee reductions. Registration required. Call **Shawna Sidney**, 416-638-7800 ext. 6215, or jfandcs.com/groups.

- Mind Body Connection for Women-Part 1: A six-session group for women who want to learn mindfulness and meditation. Starts Feb. 6, 1:30-3 p.m. or 7-8:30 p.m., 4600 Bathurst St.
- Effective Parenting: A four-session group for parents of children aged two to 10 years. Topics include: how to nurture self-esteem, encourage problem-solving, increase communication and set appropriate limits. Starts Feb. 12. 7-9 p.m., 4600 Bathurst St.
- The Jewish Rainbow Alliance: A monthly peer support group for parents, family members and allies of LGBTQ individuals. Feb. 12, 7-9 p.m., 4600 Bathurst St. Pre-registration required.
- Living With Teens: A six-session group for parents of teens. Topics include: setting appropriate limits, learning to let go, parents' rights and responsibilities, the pressures of drugs, alcohol, dating and sexuality. Starts Feb. 24, 7:30-9 p.m., 9600 Bathurst St.
- Parenting The Child/Teen with ADHD: A four-week group for parents with children/teens diagnosed with ADHD. Starts Feb. 25, 7-9 p.m., 9600 Bathurst St.
- The Challenge of Anger for Women: A six-session group for women wanting to learn how to express their anger in an assertive, non-aggressive way. Starts Feb. 25, 7:30-9 p.m., 4600 Bathurst St.

Prosserman JCC

Donald Gales Family Pavilion on the Sherman Campus, 4588 Bathurst St., 416-638-1881 ext. 4020; prossermanjcc.com.

- Sign up for the Birthright JCC Fitness Experience, for people 21-26 at Israelforfree.com.
- Shalom Singers Choir, a non-auditioned choir that performs in the community meets Mondays at 2 p.m.; supervised mah-jong meets Wednesdays at 1 p.m.; drop-in duplicate bridge, Thursdays at 12:30 p.m.
- Ongoing programs include Israeli folk dancing, choir, Yiddish conversation and more.

Miles Nadal JCC

750 Spadina Ave., 416-924-6211, mnjcc.org.

- Jewish&'s Tu b'Shevat Crafternoon, Feb. 8, 3-5 p.m., for children 3-10 and adults. Register via eventbrite.ca. $5.
- Valentine's jazz concert featuring the Ault Sisters, Feb. 13, 1 p.m., followed by reception at 2:30 p.m. $12.
- MNJCC Sing-along, Feb. 12, 1 p.m. No conductor, no sheet music, no pressure. Ext. 250. $8.
- Disability on Film with critic **Angelo Muredda,** Feb. 20, 7 p.m. $10 Tickets on eventbrite.ca
- Toronto Jewish Film Society presents *The Rape of Europa*, with guest speaker **Bernice Eisenstein**, Feb. 23, 3 p.m., Hot Docs Cinema, 506 Bloor St. W. Tickets at eventbrite.ca. $12.50
- Bust a Move Dance Party, Feb. 22, 5 p.m for people 16-30 with developmental disabilities or ASD. $10.
- Access-First Musical Theatre, Mondays starting Feb. 24. Musical theatre program for people 18-30 with developmental disabilities or ASD. Details: graces@mnjcc.org.
- Strength of Self, alternating Mondays. 11 a.m. A program for women who have experienced abuse. Call ext. 147.
- Shabbat Song Circle, Fridays at 10:30 a.m., for children up to age 4 with an adult. Ext. 390
- *We're not Waiting*, photos of people with Ehlers Danlos Syndrome, in the Gallery at the J until Feb. 26; *When I Walk Among Trees*, photos by **Theresa Bryson** on the third floor until March 1.
- **Seniors Arts and Culture**, ext. 155, lisar@mnjcc.org. **Rivka Campbell** discusses "Jews of Colour and the Jews of Jamaica," Feb. 20, 1 p.m. $5. Celebrate Shabbat in Song with **Isaac Muzikansky** and **Alexander Veprinsky**, Feb. 28, lunch at 12:30 p.m., ceremony at 1 p.m. Free, register at ext. 0
- **Seniors Fitness**, ext. 521. Start Here, a free community wellness integration program designed to provide peer support, community engagement and learning and recovery opportunities. Agency referral required. Call ext. 574
- Michael Bernstein Chapel holds services Thursdays at 7:15 a.m. and Sundays at 8 a.m. Info: **Coleman**, 416-968-0200.

Schwartz/Reisman Centre

Joseph and Wolf Lebovic JCC, 9600 Bathurst St., 905-303-1821. Contact **Andrea** for info: andrea@srcentre.ca, or ext. 3006.

- Celebrate Tu b'Shevat with **Yael** and **Ravid** and JNF with crafts, games and more, Feb. 10, 5-7 p.m.
- Programs for people with Parkinson's: boxing classes, contact yorkregion@rsbaffiliate.com; cycling program, Thursdays at 1:30 p.m., contact stephen@srcentre.ca; mindfulness, contact melissa@theyogapath.ca.
- ShirRonTo, an Israeli choir, is open by audition. Contact shironto10@gmail.com or **Galya Sarner**, 416-638-1881, ext. 4472.
- Recreational programs for children, teens and young adults with autism spectrum disorder, contact karina@srcentre.ca, or ext. 3042. ■

AUTHORS & POETS

THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
CJN

Annual Passover Literary Supplement

We invite readers to submit unpublished, original short stories or poetry that explore Jewish themes.

They should not exceed 2,000 words. Selected submissions will appear in the Passover Supplement of The CJN on April 2, 2020. Not all submissions can be published, and not all those selected will appear in both Toronto and Montreal editions. We look for originality. Please don't send more than three entries.

We cannot correspond with contributors.

Deadline for submissions is Feb. 28, 2020 at noon

E-mail submissions to:

cjnliterarysupplement@gmail.com

We can only accept email submissions. We prefer Word documents.

Competing for Israel is an honour, says skater

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

"He's good at everything," Berezintsev said. "He's a good skater, a good jumper and a good spinner."

One of Gorodnitsky's biggest strengths is his competitiveness, Berezintsev continued. "He's strong mentally and very determined."

When he sets his sights on a goal, he usually attains it. "It's very easy to count on him," added Berezintsev, who trained 2011 World Junior champion Andrei Rogozine.

Like most elite athletes, Gorodnitsky got an early start in the sport. His mom, who loves the sport, got him on the ice at around age four or five.

"She said I stepped on the ice and I'd start to run. But I didn't know how to stop, so I crashed into the boards," Gorodnitsky recalled.

It was pretty clear right from the beginning that Gorodnitsky's abilities were special.

At around five or six, he started working with coach Inga Zusev and pretty soon he was entered in various regional skating competitions.

"When I first started, I liked the jumps and the feeling of being in the air and impressing people with multiple rotations," he said.

Mark Gorodnitsky competes with the Israeli figure skating team.

Last spring, Gorodnitsky graduated from Richmond Green Secondary School, where he was part of the high performance athlete program, as is his sister.

While attending school, he was able to get on the ice six times a week for about two and a half hours a time. On top of that, he did dry land training and practiced dance as well.

The short program in a figure skating events lasts up to three minutes and requires three jumps, three spins and a step sequence. The free program, which can last four minutes, requires seven jumping passes, three spins, a step sequence and a choreographic sequence.

So far, Gorodnitsky's best and highest jump is the triple axel. He's landed a quadruple toe loop in practice and is working on a quad salchow, elements necessary to vault him to the highest echelons of competitive skating.

His next major event is the Junior World Championships in March, which will be held in Tallinn, Estonia.

Representing Israel is something Gorodnitsky is quite proud of, especially considering he's among the trailblazers for the sport.

"To be part of something that is growing is invigorating," he said. "To compete for Israel feels like an honour to me." ■

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Bari Weiss: Exploring various forms of anti-Semitism

RON CSILLAG
rcsillag@thecjn.ca

New York Times columnist Bari Weiss has emerged as a clarion voice in the struggle against anti-Semitism. Her best-selling book, *How to Fight Anti-Semitism* (Crown Publishing), is an urgent wakeup call that lays out the horrifying history of Jew hatred across the centuries, but also provides a succinct and clear-eyed battle plan at a time it is needed most.

Weiss grew up as a member of the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, scene of the mass shooting in October 2018 that killed 11 worshippers.

The CJN interviewed Weiss in Toronto, where she addressed a crowd of 600 at the closing of UJA Federation's annual campaign.

Your book focuses on what you call the three-headed dragon: anti-Semitism from the far left, the far right and radical Islam. Given the anti-Semitic attacks in December in and around New York, would you now pay closer attention to anti-Semitism coming from the African-American and Latino communities?

That's a great question. I volunteered the other day that if I were to go back and rewrite the book now, I would add two things: one, a greater examination of what's going on in Brooklyn. And two, the unbelievable solidarity that was exemplified by the British Jewish community. I always looked down on British Jewry a little more than American Jewry because I saw them as being quietist, and I really find myself not just revising my view, but eating my words.

It's obvious in the case of the two most lethal attacks, the one in Monsey, and the one in Jersey City, that those were carried out by people who were deeply influenced by the extreme nationalist views of the Black Hebrew Israelites. But we have no idea what's motivating mostly young Black teenagers who attack Haredi Jews on the streets. The fact of their race doesn't tell me what's motivating that person. In the case of Monsey and Jersey City, we can say it was black-nationalism because the attackers wrote it in their diaries, in their Google searches and in their text messages.

Jonathan Greenblatt, head of the Anti-Defamation League, points out that something like 13 per cent of anti-Semitic incidents in the States last year were carried out by white supremacists. Which means that the vast majority were not, and that diffuse, inchoate hate that's hard to tie directly to an ideological stream is something that is perplexing and very hard to target, because it's not necessarily driven by ideology.

You call anti-Semitism from the left more dangerous and insidious than anti-Semitism from other quarters. Is your political slip showing?

[Laughs] I don't know the last time I wore a slip! Those who accused me of somehow being blind or soft to anti-Semitism from the far right, it baffles me, given the community I come from. And not that those people would know this, but I have very deep ties to people whose lives were shattered by white supremacist violence. It's a threat that I take very seriously, not least in my own life. Those people really, really hate me. I'm under no illusions that, God forbid, if someone's going to walk into a synagogue where I'm speaking with a gun, likely that person is going to be from the alt-right.

The people who lodge that accusation are just desperate not to see anti-Semitism in their own precincts. And I'm unwilling to be blind or half blind. And that's what it seems they want. Because whenever it seems to crop up on the far-left, the excuse making for it or the ignoring of it seems to have no limits.

Bari Weiss

Do you expect Jewish support for U.S. President Donald Trump to go up in 2020?

I recently asked some Jews in New York, "if it's Bernie Sanders versus Donald Trump, who are you voting for? How many of you are going to write people in?" In a group of 14, I think 11 hands went up for write-in. I think the problem that I address in the book of political homelessness on the part of American Jewry is going to get more stark, especially if the Democratic candidate is Bernie Sanders. Whether or not that will actually translate into more votes for Donald Trump, I don't think so. I just don't think most Jews will go there, and for good reason. But I cannot see them supporting Bernie Sanders if he's a candidate either.

Do you see differences between anti-Semitism in the U.S. and Canada?

University campus battles seem to be more intense and unhinged here. But you guys are probably less concerned about a crazy Jew-hater walking into Shabbat morning services with a gun because you don't have, blessedly, the crazy gun policies that we unfortunately have in America.

You end the book on a very positive note, advising Jews to get involved, join a synagogue, express and nurture their Jewish identity. That seems a particular challenge to American Jews, who are experiencing ever-higher levels of assimilation, intermarriage, and lack of identification with Israel.

I think one of the barometers of our success in terms of assimilating into America is also a Jewish failure, meaning something like 70 per cent of non-Orthodox Jews marry outside the tribe, which gives you a sense that the melting pot has worked. But that has also meant that Jewish Americans have melted maybe a bit too much.

What I think is powerful about this moment is the sense that we are increasingly under attack. That has made a lot of people feel as when a schoolyard bully denigrates you or punches you. It makes you want to punch back. It makes you want to defend who you are.

I'm very much in touch with the younger generation of American Jews and I see that process happening in extremely powerful ways. I'm under no illusions that it might be a smaller but more committed core. And I'm OK with that. ■

This interview has been edited and condensed for style and clarity.

Sonny Goldstein, CFP
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They hate Jews because we refuse to disappear

WENDY R. EISEN

For all of us with tender hearts, a deluge of hate speech is agonizing – agonizing that the demonization of Israel and contemporary anti-Semitism have permeated global society. No country, no city is immune. How is it possible that 75 years after six million innocent men, women and children met their deaths in eastern Europe, still the victims are Jews?

Judaism is built on a foundation of memory. Memory has been central to the survival of the Jewish people, dispersed for thousands of years through persecution, pogroms, expulsion and forced migration - and then renewal, in their ancient homeland. *Zachor*, the Hebrew word for "remember," is repeated nearly 200 times in the Bible. We are commanded to remember the Sabbath, to remember God's covenant with Abraham, to remember the exodus from Egypt.

We remember the Holocaust.

We also remember that 50 years ago, three million Jews lived in the Soviet Union. Under the Communist regime, Jews were denied the right to practise their religion, culture and traditions. They were denied their inalienable right to repatriate to their historic homeland. They were the Jews of silence.

Many Soviet Jews aspired to emigrate to Israel. Most were refused. They were dubbed the "refuseniks," and some were imprisoned. We who remembered these Jews were not silent.

The Soviet Jewry campaign began in the United States in the 1960s with the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry and morphed into a comprehensive movement that encompassed advocacy groups on several continents. Targeted advocacy, peaceful demonstrations and rallies were the trademarks of this global movement.

Canadians became major players. Jewish organizations, schools and synagogues adopted individual refuseniks and prisoners. People of all faiths joined the struggle. Media captured the myriad creative demonstrations staged by "The 35s" - a group of young mothers whose activism took us to the streets on a regular basis to speak out for those who could not speak out for themselves.

The ultimate liberation of Soviet Jewry was due to a united effort by people of goodwill everywhere. At international gatherings, their commitment was validated, ideas were exchanged. Activists returned to their countries inspired with renewed energy.

> "Never has anyone broken the spirit of the Jewish people"

The Second World Conference on Soviet Jewry, held in Brussels in 1976, brought 1,200 delegates from 32 countries together. We Canadian activists met our global counterparts in the halls. Together we strategized on how best to pressure the Soviets to let our people go.

At the concluding plenary session, the room grew silent as all eyes turned to Golda Meir, as the 70-year-old grandmother approached the podium. The fearless leader began by asking: "What is it that anti-Semites can't forgive us? What is the greatest of our faults?"

She went on to answer her own question: "We just refuse to disappear! No matter how strong, brutal or ruthless the forces against us might be: here we are. Millions of bodies broken, buried alive, burned to death but never has anyone succeeded in breaking the spirit of the Jewish people."

That spirit inspired advocacy. Indeed, our spirit inspired many people join us Slowly, the Iron Curtain parted - and one million Soviet Jews began their 2,000 year journey home

The words of Meir continue to resonate today. Never has anyone broken the spirit of the Jewish people. It is that spirit which makes us proud, courageous, determined. Our pride, our courage and our determination will empower us to galvanize a groundswell of support to meet today's daunting challenge – so we may leave to our children and grandchildren, a kinder world, free of Jew-hatred, intolerance and prejudice – a world of peace. ■

Wendy R. Eisen is a former Soviet Jewry activist and author of the book Count Us In - The Struggle to Free Soviet Jews. *The above essay includes remarks she delivered at the 2019 JNF Negev Dinner.*

Married with Kids

The strain of dementia on a relationship

Lauren Kramer

As dementia continues to pillage my dad's mind, it occurs to me that oft-used phrases, like "I love you" and "I'm here for you," really don't mean very much until they're challenged. These words of caring and professed affection slip so easily from the tongue and so gently into the ear of the recipient that they have become commonplace. No question, it feels great to hear folks tell you they love you and they have your back. But until those words need to be transformed into actionable deeds, how can you ever be certain you mean them?

What does it mean to love someone through thick and thin, through illness and health? And when a prolonged illness prevails, how, exactly, do you prove your love? These questions pester a conscience already heavy with the burden of my father's illness. What are the limits for a loving daughter to prove her love and still live her own life? There's no line in the sand to delineate where duty starts and ends, or when you can comfort your conscience that you did everything you could. There's always room to do more, sacrifice more time, more effort, more everything, for someone you love.

My siblings and I have put caregivers in the front lines of dad's needs and it's the caregivers that do the dirty work of preparing his food, crumbling his daily doses of medication into yogurt and feeding it to him, ensuring his bowels work and that his clothes are clean. We who have professed our love all our lives pop in for half-hour visits when it's convenient, watching anxiously as his movements become stiffer, his belt looser and his mind emptier of any organization.

Half an hour is not a long time in a day, but in my dad's company it feels endless. The illness is a monster, a now unavoidable spectacle that demands to be looked at. To be with our father is to be forced to acknowledge, on a weekly and daily basis, the continuing decline of his condition. Last week it became apparent that cable television was no longer a necessary expense. This week we learned that he can no longer dial numbers on the telephone, meaning the landline is essentially defunct. Every week there's a new loss, a fresh, shocking blow, a metaphoric ice bucket dumped on the head of a visiting child that tortures the mind long after the half-hour visit has passed.

We watch in shocked silence, deeply grateful that the caregivers are sparing our dad days, weeks and months in an institution. We know that in a "home" his needs would not be equally met and that none of us could justify halting our own lives and disrupting our families to serve as his caregivers. We "throw money" at this illness, praying it will preserve some vague quality of life for the time that remains, however long that will be.

Is this love? Or were our words empty when we murmured them? Those words of affection came so easily when our father was our personal taxi, our financial provider, our home-based doctor when we were sick kids holed up in bed. When he was a fit, able, full-functioning member of society it was easy to look at him with admiration and pride, to say, "this, here, is my father, and I love him!"

He's a shuffling ghost of that person now, much harder to remember as the smart, funny, loving, radiologist he once was. That's the man we want to recall, but the dementia-ridden senior that nags at our conscience is the one in the forefront of our lives. He needs our love and our time, but it's much harder to give those things freely and generously right now.

After her stroke, my grandmother spent the last three years of her life in a home calling my father's name. I comfort myself with the recollection that all those years ago, my dad did what he had to do to deal with an excruciatingly difficult situation.

Today we are faced with that excruciation and each of us deals with it as best we can. But if this is a test of our love, I often fear that we fail horribly to prove our affection. ■

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Nematian, Pansa	January 24, 2020	17 Farmstead Rd
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Golden, Lillian	January 25, 2020	94 York Hill Blvd
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A governor general in the Holy Land

Q&A: After a whirlwind trip to Israel, Julie Payette reflects on Holocaust education. **PAGE 37**

Insuring a terrorist

Top court rules that the widow of a Palestinian terrorist can't collect on his policy. **PAGE 14**

Enduring Uncut Gems

You probably won't like Adam Sandler's latest film. And that's the point. **PAGE 31**

The end is just the beginning

Avrum Rosensweig looks back on 700 columns, and forward to his new podcast. **PAGE 10**

DRESDEN'S INFERNO

Striving to comprehend the firebombing of Dresden, 75 years later. **PAGE 8**

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Quotable

"[illegible]"

— Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg's revelation at the Silicon Slopes Tech Conference, on Jan. 31.

Inside today's edition

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Trending

A pinching unto the nations

"Pinched Fingers" is the name of one of the new icons being released later this year by the Unicode Consortium. It was proclaimed as one of Israel's favourite hand gestures by those who associate the pinch with imploring patience, or alerting someone to hang on a minute. But that translation is up against Italians (including the emoji's creator, Adriano Farano) who see it as a symbol of disagreement; Arabs are prone to knowing it as a maternal threat; in India, it can be a way of asking if someone is hungry. Regardless, the fingers can count on avoiding the 2018 backlash that pushed Unicode to modify its bagel emoji to look fresher than the ones sold frozen.

Juno nominee has no words

Alexandra Stréliski, a Montreal neoclassical pianist, earned three Juno Award nominations for her 2018 album *Inscape*, along with an instrumental music nod, she's up for Breakthrough Artist of the Year, and she's competing for the overall album prize against Bryan Adams and Michael Bublé, plus rapper Nav and Junos host Alessia Cara. The latter win on March 15 would be a subversive coup for Stréliski, 35, since her mass media attention has so far been largely confined to Quebec. But she has at least one Toronto fan who got a forearm tattoo of the *Inscape* cover, which she shared on Twitter: "Le néoclassique est VRAIMENT le nouveau hip-hop."

The convert who loved Kirk

Kirk Douglas, who died on Feb. 6 at age 103, was a Hollywood star thanks to 1949's boxing drama *Champion*, to 1953's filmed-in-Israel *The Juggler*, and the 1960 epic *Spartacus*. After that, he was recognized mostly as the father of actor Michael Douglas, but also for an enthusiasm for Judaism that came after he survived a 1991 helicopter crash. The actor born Issur Danielovich had a second bar mitzvah, per the custom, at age 83. Four years later, he remarried second wife Anne Buydens, when she converted in time for their 50th anniversary. "Kirk has been married to two shiksas," she joked, "and it's about time he married a nice Jewish girl." ■

Compiled by Marc Weisblott of CJN Today, our email newsletter. CJNews.com/today.

Gematria

28

The age of James Potok, the "rapper" from Vaughan, Ont., who was charged with mischief after telling fellow passengers on a Jamaica-bound flight that he had coronavirus.

67

The age of Paul Reubens, the comedian known as Pee-wee Herman, who's just kicked off a 25-city U.S. screening tour of 1985's *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*.

81

The age of Bernie Madoff, who's requested an early release from his 150-year prison sentence, because he's been told that he has 18 months left to live.

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Letters to the Editor

The 'deal of the century?'

As an experienced mediator, I am dismayed that any head of state acting as an impartial peace proponent could announce a peace plan that misses a fundamental criterion: the participation of both parties ("Canadians have mixed reactions to peace deal," Feb. 6). For any plan, no matter how innovative, to get serious consideration it needs a fair and respectful process that ensures both sides have a voice, to address the expressed interests of each side and to not be imposed as a take it or leave it deal.

If a plan is presented publicly, without negotiation, and one side gives it unanimous approval, while the other side completely rejects it, it cannot be welcomed as good for either side, or seen as furthering the cause of peace.

Each of U.S. President Donald Trump's pronouncements have been music to the ears of many Jews – declaring Jerusalem the undivided capital of Israel, giving Israel sovereignty over the Golan Heights, and erasing the application of international law to the expansion and annexation of settlements and the Jordan Valley. If we were Palestinians, could any of these provisions be acceptable as a path to peace? If the answer is 'no', we should not celebrate Trump's declarations.

Barbara Landau, co-chair, Canadian Association of Jews and Muslims
Toronto

Holocaust education debated

Kudos to your columnist, Avrum Rosensweig, for his column questioning the value of Holocaust education ("The failure of Holocaust education," Jan. 16).

We Jews are a strange lot, responding with teaching. No other people would reply with education to the barbaric slaughter of half their nation. We think that by telling our unspeakable tales it will melt hateful hearts and turn Hitlers into heavenly angels. What naïveté!

Ironically, I have spent much of my working life doing just that: lecturing, writing plays, books and making films on the subject, only to find 75 years later that my and countless others' efforts of this kind didn't seem to have made a dent. A deaf and blind world is still uncomfortable with our presence on this planet.

Isn't it time to stop educating others about the Shoah and teach ourselves the obvious lesson: people are motivated by power and fear.

Thus, when entering a jungle with a Torah in one arm, make sure you have an Uzi in the other.

Jack Kuper, author of *Child of the Holocaust*
Toronto

While I don't disagree with anything in the editorial ("The muddled state of Holocaust education," Jan. 30), one very important point was left out. Holocaust education in our country is not obligatory. It is an optional unit in the curriculum (with many resources available) but it is not mandated.

I find this beyond credulity, given how the politicians pay lip service to remembering this darkest chapter in civilization, yet no legislation is forthcoming.

Holocaust education has been mandatory in Germany for decades now, and most recently, Argentina has followed suit. If we are serious about what we say and how we feel about it, Canada too must follow in line.

Eileen Shapero
Thornhill, Ont.

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Rabbi2Rabbi

The role of the Holocaust in Jewish education

Does teaching about the Shoah make children associate Judaism with death?

RABBI MICAH STREIFFER
TEMPLE KOL AMI, THORNHILL

RABBI ERIC GROSSMAN
AKIVA SCHOOL, MONTREAL

A. KIMEDIA COMMONS

Rabbi Grossman: One of my first jobs in education was as a teacher in a liberal Jewish temple outside of Boston. Upon being hired, the rabbi of the synagogue told me that I was free to teach almost anything I wanted - he had no concerns about having an Orthodox Jew as an instructor in his school, and was very happy to have his students exposed to Orthodox ideas and doctrine. I was very impressed with his openness.

You can imagine my surprise, then, when he told me that the only topic that was off-limits was the Holocaust. His standpoint was that teaching the Shoah makes children associate Judaism with darkness and death. He wanted his young congregants to associate the Jewish tradition with life and light. By contrast, during my own education in traditional Jewish schools in Toronto, the Holocaust was a central part of the curriculum.

Do you think there is merit to the view of this New England rabbi?

Rabbi Streiffer: I think it is crucial that we teach our children about the Shoah. The Holocaust has important lessons for us about the realities of anti-Semitism and its continued prevalence, and about our responsibility to ensure that no group is ever singled out for hatred and discrimination and destruction. Rabbi Emil Fackenheim once taught that the Shoah gives us a 614th commandment: "Not to hand Hitler posthumous victories." That kind of thinking has shaped Jewish life for 75 years. It's hard to really understand the North American Jewish experience, or to understand the importance of Israel, without knowing about the Shoah.

And yet, something is shifting. Today, younger people relate to the Holocaust less and less. They feel farther removed from it. They know fewer and fewer survivors (if any). They largely feel safe as Jews living in North America (despite recent disturbing trends of rising anti-Semitism). On the one hand, that makes it even more important to teach - especially when some public schools are removing Holocaust education from their curricula. On the other hand, it means we can't rely on the historical memory of a tragedy to ensure Jewish identity.

That's not entirely a bad thing. While we don't want to forget the awfulness of the Holocaust, neither is it healthy to build Jewish identity around it. Despite Fackenheim's teachings, I don't want kids to want to be Jewish to spite the Nazis. I want them to want to be Jewish because they find it uplifting, edifying and spiritually meaningful.

As Jewish educators, we are responsible to help our kids develop positive associations with Judaism, and also to make sure they know about the realities of anti-Semitism.

Rabbi Grossman: The founder of my school, Rabbi David Hartman, wrote a particularly powerful essay on this topic, provocatively titled, "Auschwitz or Sinai?" Hartman was a very popular rabbi here in Montreal, which, like Toronto, has a one of the largest communities of survivors in the world. He was certainly sensitive to the significance of the Shoah in Jewish education. And yet, he was very concerned by your question about balance.

"Auschwitz, like all Jewish suffering of the past, must be absorbed and understood within the normative framework of Sinai," he said. "We will mourn forever because of the memory of Auschwitz. We will build a healthy new society because of the memory of Sinai."

I think that advice is wise. Sinai, not Auschwitz should be our orienting category. Sinai - God, covenant and life - should be our guiding educational framework.

Rabbi Streiffer: Thanks for opening my eyes to that beautiful statement by Rabbi Hartman. To be a Jew is to always have one eye toward the past and the other gazing into the future.

We can best honour the memories of those who were lost by building vibrant, beautiful Jewish life in the here-and-now. May their memories be for a blessing, and may they inspire us on our journey. ■

DANIELS & BAIF

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Daniels BAIF

Bernie and the 11 per cent

"How do you think your Jewish heritage impacts your vision of the world and politics?" U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders was asked last week at a town hall meeting ahead of the New Hampshire primaries. "It impacts me very profoundly," he answered. "When I try to think about how I came to the views that I hold, there are two major factors… No 1, I grew up in a family that didn't have a whole lot of money.… And the second one is being Jewish."

On the 2020 U.S. presidential campaign trail, Sanders has been talking a lot about his Jewish heritage. A recent video shows him saying, "I'm very proud to be Jewish and look forward to becoming the first Jewish president in the history of this country." It's a stark contrast from the 2016 Democratic presidential candidacy race, when Sanders was seen by many to be downplaying his Jewishness. After winning New Hampshire that time around, he caught flak for describing himself as "the son of a Polish immigrant who came to this country speaking no English and having no money," prompting the *New York Times* to run with the headline Bernie Sanders Is Jewish. But He Doesn't Like to Talk About It.

Now he is talking about it. What changed?

Sanders offered an explanation of sorts last fall at the annual conference of the progressive American group J Street. "If there's any group on Earth that should be trying to bring people together around a common and progressive agenda," he argued, "it is the Jewish people." No doubt, a significant number of American Jews, younger ones especially, have latched on to that message. Last Saturday night in New Hampshire, Jewish Sanders supporters held a *Havdalah* ceremony at a campaign office, after which one of them posted a video to Twitter of Jews singing and swaying together, along with the message, "We've spent the day knocking doors for Bernie, and as Jews, we will honour our values, defeat Trump and white nationalism, and build an America for all of us."

But lots of people aren't buying Sanders' Jewish awakening, believing there is something else at play. After all, Sanders has railed against the Israeli occupation and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

> *Lots of people aren't buying Sanders' Jewish awakening, believing there is something else at play.*

"It is not anti-Semitism to say that the Netanyahu government has been racist," he has said – and some of his most prominent supporters, including U.S. congresswomen Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Rashida Tlaib, as well as Palestinian activist Linda Sarsour, have been correctly accused of spouting anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. He has also mused about conditioning American aid to Israel on its treatment of the Palestinians.

His detractors argue that Sanders is providing cover for progressive American Jews and a Democratic party that certainly on its left wing, is moving away from Israel. Sanders has implied as much, noting, "It's going to be very hard for anybody to call me, whose father's family was wiped out by Hitler, who spent time in Israel, an anti-Semite."

Maybe so, but plenty of Jewish Democrats (along with many moderate Democrats) are clearly concerned about Sanders. A recent survey indicates only 11 per cent of Jewish Democrat voters rank him as their first choice for the presidential nomination, behind Joe Biden (the top pick at 31 per cent), Elizabeth Warren (20 per cent) and Pete Buttigieg (13 per cent). (The other Jewish Democratic presidential candidate, Mike Bloomberg, received just eight per cent). True, the Jewish vote is unlikely to make any difference in who wins the Democratic nomination, but if Bernie ultimately takes it, the first Jewish candidate for the American presidency will have to face the fact that a wide swath of the American Jewish community have a very hard time trusting him. ■ — YONI

From the Archives

Cheder

ONTARIO JEWISH ARCHIVES, BLANKENSTEIN FAMILY HERITAGE CENTRE, UJA FEDERATION OF GREATER TORONTO

Alexander Brown instructed this pre-bar mitzvah class at Toronto's Shaarei Shomayim in 1942. Students identified in the photo include Avrom Buckstein, Arnie Morrison, Reuvein Landsberg, Jack Geller, David Satok, Norman Rasky, Leon Gasner, Gerry Benson, Leo Snowbell, Ben Steinberg, Earl Farber, Albert Strauss. Recognize any others in the photo? Contact the OJA ojainquiries@ujafed.org. From the Steinberg family collection.

SeeJN

Tu b'Shevat

DAVID COHEN/FLASH90 PHOTO

Men in the northern Israeli town of Meron prepare for a seder dinner on Feb. 9, the eve of Tu b'Shevat, or "New Year for the Trees", with a table filled with fruits and nuts, traditionally eaten for the holiday.

Essay

Let's discuss the message, not the messenger

Dyanoosh Youssefi

Late into a family Shabbat dinner, someone dropped a Trump bomb, and a couple of people spoke in the U.S president's favour. I objected that, in addition to every other problem, Donald Trump has shown himself to be anti-Semitic, or to at least hold anti-Semitic views.

I elaborated with a recent example, when Trump, in speaking to the Israeli American Council's National Summit, repeated anti-Semitic tropes about Jews and money, telling the audience that while they may not like him, they will be his biggest supporters, because they don't want to pay higher taxes. In the president's apparent view, I said, Jews care exclusively about financially enriching themselves at the expense of everyone and everything else. Had the same words, I added, been spoken by someone else – say Barack Obama – they would be immediately dubbed by most Jews as anti-Semitic (many Jewish groups, did, in fact, condemn the president's message).

But Trump too often gets a pass.

The response to my missive at the Shabbat table was not to evaluate Trump's message. It had nothing to do with content. Instead, the validity of my conclusion was challenged with a question: "Have you ever, in your life, voted Conservative?"

When I hear things like that, I fear democracy is in danger. We need to be more vigilant.

Increasingly, public and private political discourse, including among Jews, is not really about facts, evidence, or policies. It is about personalities. The audience does not judge the validity of arguments or the truthfulness of a claim by the facts and evidence the speaker relates, but by the ideology of that speaker.

Donald Trump has shown himself to hold anti-Semitic views, according to Dyanoosh Youssefi.
WHITE HOUSE PHOTO

Truth and accuracy are not determined by what is said, but by who says it.

At the Shabbat table, it mattered not what I said, and whether what I said was, in fact, true. It did not even matter what Trump said. All that my critics needed to know in order to invalidate my claim was where I leaned politically. Anything I say about Trump, even if true, is dismissed because I lean to the left.

This has become a common and acceptable mode of reasoning.

I experienced a similar incident on Facebook recently. Someone posted an article about an executive order signed by Trump, one supposedly intended to help Jewish students on campus. I commented that Trump is not a friend of the Jews, that his actions and values were contrary to Jewish values, and that he panders to anti-Semites.

The response boiled down to a dismissal of my argument with an attack on my presumed political ideology: "I suspect your post stems from the fact that you lean to the left and simply cannot handle the fact (like the Democrats with the impeachment witch hunt) that he is actually president," one person responded.

I'm progressive, therefore I am wrong.

Why debate the usefulness of bike lanes, when you can dismiss its advocates by calling them "pinkos?" Why rationally discuss the pros and cons of student union fees, when you can label its proponents "Marxists?" Why deal with the substance of allegations that a president may have invited foreign intervention into electoral matters, when you can call any inquiry a "witch hunt" and throw in Jews as the perpetrators?

Now, I am not saying that those who identify as liberal or left-wing are immune to the same kind of tactic. As readers of this paper are well aware, we have increasingly seen the label "Zionist" used by some on the left to demonize people discussing Israeli-Palestinian relations, or even used to disparage a request for kosher food on campus. I believe that these instances often have something more sinister at heart, and that they too present a threat to democracy.

This fusion – or rather, confusion – of political leanings with the validity of a person's claims and opinions is dangerous for several reasons. It obstructs civil, evidence-based discussion. It blinds us to reasonable criticisms of those whom we support, and results in our ignoring and excusing the wrongdoings of those leaders. Consequently, we do not hold our leaders accountable.

And it is not surprising that we increasingly conflate a person's political leanings with the legitimacy of their arguments. After all, we are merely mirroring the absurdity of the conversation of some of our politicians and media personalities.

Undermining an argument by attacking the speaker is not new in politics,but it does seem to be a growing phenomenon. Its proliferation and acceptance as a compelling means of dismissing an actual fact or argument is an alarming threat. It should concern us, and urge us to teach our children to separate evidence from opinions, fact from fiction.

We need to assess allegations and facts objectively, refrain from knee-jerk dismissals that do not fit our preferred narrative. Let's hold commentators and politicians who use inflammatory rhetoric accountable. It's time to reclaim our right– our responsibility – to substantiate events, words, and facts, for ourselves. When the struggle to determine and search for the truth ends, so does democracy. ■

Dyanoosh Youssefi is a professor of legal studies at Humber College in Toronto. She can be found on Twitter at @DyanooshY.

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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
FEBRUARY 13, 2020

Revisiting the bombing of Dresden

Seventy-five years ago, the Allied destruction of a great German city was meant to break morale and win the war

MURRAY TEITEL
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Feb. 13, 1945. Dresden was defenceless, its anti-aircraft guns removed to the Eastern Front – the Luftwaffe, Germany's air force, decimated. There was not a single reinforced, ventilated shelter in the city, except for high-level Nazis and the SS.

At 10:03 p.m., a single Royal Air Force (RAF) Lancaster bomber dropped a green bomb to mark the aiming point, a stadium. It and others dropped flares to completely light up the city. Mosquito bombers, swooping down from 20,000 feet, dropped red flares that lit a path for 244 Lancasters that followed, carrying four-pound magnesium incendiary bombs and 4,000-pound blast bombs. Only 10 German fighters engaged them. The British could jam their radar. No British planes were shot down.

Incendiaries rained down in the tens of thousands. On their own, each one could be put out with a pail of sand. But the inhabitants, sheltering in basements, were unable to get to them. The blast bombs ruptured watermains and blew out the doors and windows of buildings, creating through drafts which, along with the strong wind blowing, fanned the flames.

The bombing was over in 20 minutes, but three hours later, 524 Lancasters – 67 Canadian – returned. First responders on the scene were killed. Thousands of little fires came together and created an inferno 100 metres tall, 1,000 degrees Celsius at the top, sustaining itself by drawing in all the surrounding oxygen, creating gale force winds that sucked anyone nearby into the flames. People in basement shelters inhaled carbon monoxide. Deprived of oxygen, they died. Streets turned into tar. People fleeing got stuck. Incinerated, mummified corpses were glued to the asphalt. Lampposts melted. Desperate people jumped into cement-lined reservoirs. Eventually the water got hot. Unable to get out, they cooked to death.

Thirty magnificent buildings – palaces, churches, museums, an opera house, constituting one of the most impressive collections of architecture in the world, built over three centuries in styles ranging from Renaissance through Baroque to Roccoco and neo-Classical – were either destroyed or severely damaged. The 1734 Frauenkirche, the most beautiful Protestant ecclesiastical building of the 18th century with superb acoustics and an organ built by Silbermann, the Stradivarius of organ makers (its inaugural soloist was Johann Sebastian Bach), collapsed.

Building remains after the Second World War in Dresden, Germany. SHUTTERSTOCK PHOTO

But the 1840 Semper Synagogue, named after its famous architect, Romanesque exterior, Alhambresque interior, the most beautiful in Germany, could not be destroyed. That had happened on Kristallnacht.

These 7,428 tons of bombs would not be the end of it. The following day the U.S. dispatched 417 (or 461, depending on which historian you believe) B-17 bombers escorted by 784 P-51 Mustang fighters against the Dresden train marshalling and repair yards, a target of military value, to stop German resupply of its Eastern Front 75 kilometres away. Only 316 bombers (or 311) arrived and dropped 782 tons of bombs. The other bombers and their escorts got lost and bombed Prague, 117 kilometres away, by mistake. The following day, American bombers sent to target a synthetic oil plant couldn't locate it because of fog, so bombed the rubble of Dresden instead.

Thousands of corpses were dumped in the town square and set on fire to prevent the spread of disease. Thirty-four square kilometres of the city were obliterated.

The last official wartime record put the number of dead at 22,096, though 1,800 more were unearthed as the city was rebuilt. With soldiers at the front, most of these were civilians, the primary targets of most British air raids up to that point. How could such a policy have been tolerated, even against civilians for the most part willingly and slavishly following a foaming at the mouth monster?

The British did not have a problem with targeting civilians. They won the Boer War by inventing the concentration camp. During the First World War they instituted a naval blockade that treated food like war materiel. But this time the Luftwaffe started it: the bombing raids on Guernica, Warsaw, Rotterdam, London and Coventry were attempts to bring the other side to its knees by terrifying non-combatants and destroying morale. Arthur "Bomber" Harris, who became head of RAF Bomber Command in February 1942, quoted Hosea 8:7: "They have sown the wind and they will reap the whirlwind."

When the war started, the RAF could not reliably navigate anywhere, let alone drop a bomb on a precision military target. The Butt Report of August 1941 found that only one-third of pilots who reported attacking an assigned target had bombed within eight kilometres. It was one-fifteenth on moonless nights.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

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And in conclusion ...

Avrum Rosensweig

We are a forever people, the Jewish people are. We gave justice to humankind through the Torah. We are the people who shared the oneness of God, then covered our own eyes protecting them from His illuminated countenance. We self-actualized our peoplehood through goodness

That self-actualization? What is it?

It is the founding of Israel. It is the establishment of a Diaspora. These miracles are what I wrote about. I did, because they represent our greatness. That greatness is evident everywhere. It can be seen when one looks at the merchant ports of Haifa, at the Biblical Zoo in Jerusalem, in the *beit midrash* of the Holy Land's yeshivot and at the night life in Tel Aviv. It is seen in the labs of Hebrew University where an electroluminescent device is created with nanoparticles. It is evident when IsraAID distributes solar lanterns to the victims of a cyclone in Dombe, Mozambique. Our Jewishness is similarly vibrant in Mississauga, Montreal, Windsor, Kitchener, Dartmouth, Vancouver, Sudbury, Regina and Keswick. It is seen in the alleys of Toronto, where Ve'ahavta shares sandwiches with those suffering from homeless

We are the Jewish people and that is our gift. As my late mother would quote, "all this and heaven too." And this is what I wrote about

Being a Jew also hurts. It is like stepping on a razor-sharp nail when those who love to hate, hate us. It hurts knowing there are those who hide in sewage, who are cowardly and they shoot our children in a school and butcher our family in a shul, on Shabbos. I wrote about that.

I am so deeply honoured to have written 700 articles for *The Canadian Jewish News* since 2001. Doing so, made me feel important, like I was doing something for the Jewish people and Israel. It allowed me to be heard. I needed that.

All of this could not have happened without the willingness of Mordechai "be well" Ben-Dat, *The CJN*'s former editor, to hire and encourage me to fly. My stint with this newspaper was highlighted by Yoni Goldstein's appreciation to be free in my words. And I was supported by Jesse Kline's fine and exact editing, and by all my editors who came before him.

Thank you, Joe Serge and all *The CJN* staff, past and present, for putting out one of the best Jewish newspapers in the world for a people barely able to agree about what's better, shmaltz or marinated herring. *Yashar koach* to them for allowing me to be part of that, to be a member of the family of a newspaper I have adored since childhood.

Thank you to *The CJN* readership for making me feel like a star in the fruit and veggie aisle at Metro hearing, "aren't you Avrum Rosensweig? You write for *The Canadian Jewish News*, right? I flip to your article first." Man, I loved that.

As I take my final 'writing' bow, I have to say, my fellow Jews, of all the articles I've written, the most important pieces have been those where I tried to get you off your chairs and become Jewish activists fighting anti-Semitism. Many of you have not learned from Holocaust education that Israeli Jews cannot be the only ones on the frontline. You're not getting that we are just way too comfortable. It'll come though. I can sense it. It must. We said, "never again."

So, I'm signing off and starting a new run - this time a *CJN* podcast called: "Kol Avrum." Keep an eye out. It'll be good. And in conclusion please know, having this chance to write a column for *The CJN* and being read by you, has been a gift, tied in my Jewishness. How lucky have I been. Thank God.

Am Yisra'el Chai

With love and appreciation, Avrum. ■

Do you disagree with our columnists? Have your say by writing to **cjninfo@gmail.com.**

Recognizing populism

Rabbi Dow Marmur

In a paper delivered in Toronto late last year, Jon Allen, a senior fellow at the Munk School of Global Affairs, identified five characteristics of populism: (1) Populists are often leaders with big personalities; (2) they usually offer simple solutions to complex problems; (3) they claim to represent "the people"; (4) they espouse nationalism and nativism of the "make America great again" type; (5) In Allen's words, "Populists generally play fast and loose with the truth."

Though Canada is relatively free of populism, things may be changing here, too, and not for the better. As an example, Allen points to the election of Doug Ford as premier of Ontario. Though Ford embraced immigration, "it didn't take him too long to show his true populist colours in other areas: anti-environment measures, buck a beer and legalize tailgating, reverting to a 1998 sex education policy for Ontario schools" and many other measures of that ilk.

A recently published essay on right-wing populism in the *Journal of Social Philosophy* by Frank Cunningham, emeritus professor of philosophy at the University of Toronto, begins with this statement, "My credentials for addressing this topic are that I had already experienced an urban version of Trump-style populist politics in the Toronto mayoral campaign that in 2010 elected the infamous Rob Ford. Like Trump, Ford ran on anti-elite rhetoric which in his case demonized professionals, the press and politicians of the inner city, and he drew on a constituency with many of the same features as Trump's core voters."

Reminding readers that the late Rob Ford's brother Doug Ford became the premier of Ontario eight years later "employing similar rhetoric," Cunningham concludes that "these successes mirror the strength of right-wing leaders and movements globally."

The most notorious and most powerful of them all is, of course, the president of the United States, Donald Trump. According to Allen, Trump's "persistent lying," and "masterful use of social media" is likely to be his long-lasting legacy.

One of Trump's greatest admirers and emulators is Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Last March, an editorial in the *Economist* called him "King Bibi" and described him as "a parable of modern populism" who "matters because he embodied the politics of muscular nationalism, chauvinism and the resentment of elites."

Jonathan G. Leslie of London's School of Oriental and African Studies has written that Netanyahu's set of political tactics "bears a close resemblance to those currently employed by some of the world's most prominent populist leaders." Leslie observes that "Netanyahu's actions, particularly in the realm of foreign policy, offer some of the best examples of how populist leaders operate once in power and the effects such actions can have in the global political arena."

Hence Netanyahu's affinity not only with Trump but also with other populist politicians around the world. The fact that many of them are anti-Semites doesn't seem to trouble the leader of the Jewish state. For instance, the fact that his seemingly warm relations with Viktor Orban, the prime minister of Hungary, have embarrassed Hungarian Jews hasn't inhibited Netanyahu, though he often styles himself as the spokesman and defender of Jews everywhere.

But it would trouble the Pope. Meeting in the Vatican with a delegation from the Simon Wiesenthal Center, Pope Francis described populism as the result of "selfish indifference" that "provides fertile terrain for hatred, including anti-Semitism." We don't hear words like that from the prime minister of Israel.

At the end of his paper, Allen offers several suggestions about how to respond to populism. One of them states: "Let's elect leaders who encourage diversity rather than exclusion, who tell the truth about the real challenges we face going forward, and why we try to address those challenges rather than offering simplistic solutions."

Israelis will have an opportunity to elect such leaders when they go to the polls again on March 2. The future of both the Jewish state and the Jewish Diaspora may depend on it. ■

Anti-Semitism needs to be called out on both sides

Benjamin Shinewald

In her last op-ed in *The CJN*, my column neighbour to the south, Barbara Kay, took on our fellow *CJN* columnist, Bernie Farber.

Kay disliked a piece Farber wrote in the *Toronto Star* about the recent murderous attacks against Jews in New Jersey and New York. She argued that Farber ignored the attackers' demographic group a "rage-fuelled subsection of the area's African-American population."

Though she cited studies showing elevated anti-Semitism among black Americans, Kay offered no evidence to support her claim that a "rage-fuelled subsection" even exists. It is true that the alleged perpetrators are black (like members of my own family), but these attackers may have been fueled more by mental illness and cultism than by anti-Semitic rage. Admittedly, though, it can sometimes be hard to separate one from the other.

But Kay makes a valid and important point in asserting that our own political predilections frequently shape how we experience anti-Semitism. She is also right that leftists can be quicker to highlight offences that fit into their progressive politics and to dismiss those that don't. Her discussion of black anti-Semitism, while flawed, is therefore nonetheless brave, since Kay forces this touchy issue to the fore, prompting hard discussion around its possible role in the attacks.

Kay's core point is that lefties like Farber, who was once my boss at the Canadian Jewish Congress and now chairs the Canadian Anti-Hate Network, must be as voracious in opposing left wing anti-Semitism as they are in opposing anti-Semitism from any other quarter. Farber says he is. Kay says he's not. Whatever. You can decide for yourself if you like.

I wish, though, that Kay had taken that same spirit to heart in presenting her own argument. To wit, she also confronted Farber for quoting U.S. President Donald Trump, who told a Jewish audience a few days before the New Jersey murders, "You're brutal killers, not nice people at all." (I had the same quote in my last op-ed, though I had read neither Farber's nor Kay's pieces.)

> "

Kay attacked Farber for omitting the quote's "celebratory context." She asserts that Trump was "jovially" recounting the purchase of land in Jerusalem for the new American embassy. Trump, says Kay, was "*kibitizing*" about real estate with, apparently, Jewish real estate developers.

But Kay can't have it both ways. She can't both charge that the left must confront anti-Semitism in its political orbit and then explain away counterpart anti-Semitism at the very centre of hers.

Of course, you could argue that there is no provable, causal connection between Donald Trump's bottomless vomitorium of repulsive rhetoric and individual acts of anti-Semitism. But to do so would undermine Kay's argument about black anti-Semitism and the recent attacks, which similarly lack causal connections.

More importantly, it would also require arguing that the U.S. president's words don't matter. But that's not even plausible.

So even if Kay is right, and that Trump was just *kibitzing* about real estate, and that we should just chill out and chuckle along with him, then the *kibitzing* context would still be completely lost on anyone who was not, say, a Jewish real estate developer. Millions upon millions of others, quite possibly including the New York-area attackers, just heard a wildly anti-Semitic screed from their president. And, as Kay argues with respect to African-American anti-Semitism, sooner or later anti-Semitic contexts encourage anti-Semitic violence.

It's just not that complicated: when the president of the United States calls Jews "brutal killers" and "not nice people at all," it simply makes us even less safe.

My own politics fall roughly somewhere to the right of Farber's and the left of Kay's, so it's not surprising that I find myself simultaneously in agreement and disagreement with them both.

I just wish that we can all be equally relentless in confronting anti-Semitism, irrespective of its origins and irrespective of our own political dispositions. ■

Jews, money and the grain of truth behind the stereotypes

Barbara Kay

Speaking to a Jewish group in Florida last month, U.S. Democratic presidential candidate Michael Bloomberg produced this sly dig at rival Bernie Sanders: "Now, I know I am not the only Jewish candidate in the race. But I am the only one who does not want to turn America into a kibbutz."

We are witnessing a first in American politics: two Jewish presidential candidates. One is the current front runner.

Ideologically they're as different as night from day, notably with regard to Israel. But amongst those given to stereotypical bias against Jews, merely-millionaire Sanders and billionaire Bloomberg may seem like avatars for the yin and yang of two perduring take-your-pick myths: Jewish Commies/Jewish Capitalists seek world domination on behalf of their fellow Jews.

The problem with many stereotypes is that there is a grain – sometimes more than a grain – of truth to them. The ideology of socialism has indeed attracted Jews disproportionately, and, more relevant to this column, Jews are also disproportionately represented in the capitalist stratosphere.

There are 2,604 billionaires in the world, according to a billionaire census published last year. A quarter reside in the U.S. Of the top U.S. 100, 30 are Jews, a staggering per capita percentage (Bloomberg is #10). As well, according to the 2019 *Forbes* world list, there are 21 Israeli billionaires (not even including the richest of them, Roman Abramovich, who only received his Israeli citizenship in 2018).

As in the domains of Nobel prizes (22.5 per cent) and chess (six of 16 world champions), where Jews are also wildly over-represented, many Jews react to these figures with an untidy jumble of pride, embarrassment and anxiety. We're quite aware that for every rational non-Jew who absorbs these figures with admiration, far more numerous are those who view them with resentment or as fodder for conspiracy theories.

With chess championships and Nobel prizes, not to mention start-up nation technological advancements, however, our pride predominates. Such accomplishments do not cause even a smidgen of the discomfort we feel about fabulous wealth, and the influence of Jewish wealth in societies past and present. (Does hearing the name George Soros make you flinch? It does me.)

If it was anxiety you were looking for on that subject, you would have found plenty of triggers for it in an exhibition, which ended last October, at the London Jewish Museum, titled "Jews, Money, Myths."

The exhibition debunked persistent libels, but gave unflinching attention to the outsize role of wealthy Jews in business, philanthropy and social causes. I did not see the "Jews, Money, Myths" myself, so was interested to the various responses it elicited.

The analysis of it by Jonathan Karp, professor of history and Judaic studies at SUNY, Binghamton, in the fall issue of *Jewish Review of Books*, had me brooding over the cost/benefits of such an exhibit.

Karp says the achievement of the exhibit was to "normalize the Jewish relationship with money without negating those factors that made this particular historical association especially fraught." The exhibit, for example, walks the viewer through the history of Christian economic anti-Semitism and Jewish adaptations to it from the Middle Ages to the present.

Interesting to objective visitors, perhaps, but can it compete for attention against inflammatory artefacts such as anti-Semitic murals like "Freedom for Humanity," (the one Jeremy Corbyn briefly endorsed and backtracked on) and grotesque depictions of the Rothschilds, indicating the "monstrous proportions" reached by anti-Semitic conspiracy theories in the 19th century – and their "ultimately fatal consequences for European Jews."

Jews make up 19 per cent of the world's wealthiest people, a statistic noted by the curator. How does one "normalize" that fact to exhibit visitors who attended to find corroboration for their bias? What is that statistic?

A closing video sequence serves a "mash-up of current manifestations of the Jews and money canard, featuring – of course – George Soros "(the Shylock/Barabbas of the day)." I'm left wondering, was this exhibit good or bad for the Jews? ■

News

Faculty upset at U of T's handling of anti-Semitism

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Jewish faculty at the University of Toronto are angry with the school's president, Meric Gertler, after their request for a meeting to discuss anti-Semitism on campus was ignored.

An ad hoc group of Jewish professors and lecturers, mostly in the medical and dental faculties, had asked for a meeting after the University of Toronto's Graduate Students Union (UTGSU) signalled it would not support an effort by Hillel to introduce kosher food on campus.

UTGSU backtracked from that position, apologized and the "external commissioner" who made a comment saying Hillel's pro-Israel position would likely lead the UTGSU to not support kosher food, resigned.

On Jan. 23, Hillel announced that kosher food would be available on campus, but that has not satisfied the Jewish educators.

They say there is a climate of anti-Semitism at the Toronto school, reflected in the UTGSU's support for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) and Israel Apartheid Week (IAW) movements.

Prof. Howard Tenenbaum, spokesman for the ad hoc Jewish professors group, said he and other faculty have heard from Jewish students who feel uncomfortable on campus and intimidated because of the BDS and IAW campaigns, waged by the UTGSU.

The university is not doing enough to address it, Tenenbaum told *The CJN*. Moreover, a letter sent to Gertler, signed by 80 professors, was ignored. The professors never had the courtesy of a reply, he said.

Tenenbaum said the impetus for the original letter came after the UTGSU refusal to endorse kosher food on campus, but the climate of anti-Semitism goes back much further.

Prof. Howard Tenenbaum

Their letter to Gertler says that "Since 2012, when the UTGSU endorsed the anti-Semitic BDS movement and committed student funds to this discriminatory campaign through the formation of the BDS Committee ... the situation on campus for Jewish students has continually worsened, culminating in this most recent episode.

"If the University of Toronto is serious about combating anti-Semitism on campus ... now is the time to make due on that promise. We must take serious, unrelenting, and uncompromising action to combat the world's oldest hatred being demonstrated at the University of Toronto right now."

The letter went on to make several suggestions, including: condemning as anti-Semitic the UTGSU's actions regarding kosher food, investigating the UTGSU for anti-Semitism and adopting the definition of anti-Semitism set out by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). Guidelines associated with that definition describe anti-Semitism as denying the Jewish people the right to self-determination and applying double standards to Israel that are not applied to other democratic nations.

Tenenbaum said since sending the letter to Gertler on Nov. 18 the professors have met with B'nai Brith Canada to coordinate further action. The ad hoc group now plans to reach out to more Jewish U of T professors, teaching assistants and others – perhaps a few hundred – and send another letter to Gertler, requesting a meeting with him.

Ultimately, the professors want the university to adopt the IHRA definition and to apply it to end BDS efforts on campus and abolish the IAW campaign. Both are anti-Semitic in nature, he said.

Responding to queries from *The CJN*, a U of T media spokesman stated, "The President has reviewed the (professors' letter. The group has raised a number of concerns and there are plans for the university to follow up."

After noting the university had worked with students to secure kosher food at three locations on campus, the spokesman went on to distance the UTGSU.

"The UTGSU is an autonomous student organization that acts independently from the University of Toronto ... All such autonomous organizations are required by the university's policies to operate in an open, accessible and democratic manner, including a commitment to equity and to allowing a diversity of perspectives to be heard.

"We have written to the UTGSU to remind them of this obligation. We note that UTGSU has issued an apology and taken other actions.

"The University of Toronto is strongly committed to the values of diversity and inclusion. Our Anti-Racism and Cultural Diversity Office and our Multi-Faith Centre, among other services and initiatives on all three campuses, challenge anti-Semitism and all forms of discrimination. We encourage all members of the university community to demonstrate our shared responsibility to create an inclusive and welcoming environment."

Psychology prof. Stuart Kamenetsky, one of the signatories of the letter to Gertler, called the university's response inadequate.

"As always, the U of T's answers are nothing but cowardly and evasive," he said. "I feel that the U of T is not dealing with this issue in good faith, is disrespectful to the prominent faculty involved – not even agreeing to meet with us – and is unprepared to admit serious problems that it is actually aware of.

"There is no implication whatsoever that the U of T in general (staff, students, policies and procedures) are anti-Semitic. Rather, the administration, by not taking strong leadership against small hateful groups, is providing a platform for anti-Semitic hate that has not only made life for Jewish students on campus difficult, but also increasingly tarnishing the university's reputation," Kamenetsky stated. ■

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Widow of terrorist cannot collect insurance: court

RON CSILLAG
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Ontario's top court has ruled that the widow of a Palestinian terrorist may not collect on his life insurance policy because he hid his violent past.

Fadia Khalil Mohammad is not entitled to the $75,000 payout because her husband, Mahmoud Mohammad Issa Mohammad, a Palestinian terrorist who lived in Canada for 26 years, "intentionally withheld" information on his application for the insurance policy, the Ontario Court of Appeal found

In a decision released on Jan. 29, the three-judge panel overturned a lower court ruling that had found in favour of the widow, partly because the insurance application form had not asked about her husband's immigration status or citizenship.

Mohammad knew that his past activities were relevant to his application for life insurance, the appeal court stated in its short ruling, and that withholding key details "is sufficient to establish fraud."

The insurer, Manufacturers Life Insurance Co., "cannot be faulted" for not having inquired into Mohammad's past, it added.

Mahmoud Mohammad Issa Mohammad

In 1968, Mohammad and a second gunman from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) attacked an El Al airplane at the airport in Athens, Greece. Mohammad strafed the plane with gunfire and hurled incendiary grenades. One passenger, Leon Shirdan, a 50-year-old Israeli marine engineer en route to New York, was killed.

Arrested at the scene, Mohammad was sentenced to 17 years in jail for manslaughter and other offences. He was freed in a deal when Palestinian terrorists stormed a Greek airliner and threatened to kill the passengers.

> "He was well aware that his past activities, coupled with his illegal entry into Canada, put him at serious risk of physical harm."
>
> **Ontario Court of Appeal**

Mohammad moved to Canada in 1987, settling in Brantford, Ont. On his application for a visa, he declared he had never been convicted of any offence.

The court of appeal said he came to this country "fraudulently by using an alias."

In 1988, an immigration adjudicator ordered him removed but it wasn't until 2013 that he was deported to Lebanon. Mohammad died from lung cancer in 2015 at the age of 72.

In its ruling, the high court stated Mohammad took out the policy in April 1987 because he needed it to obtain a mortgage. He provided a social insurance number and said he had just moved to Canada from Spain.

Canadian insurance laws require applicants to disclose all facts material to a policy. Mohammad's past actions "were material to the risk that he posed for the purpose of having his life insured," the court held.

The court pointed out that shortly after he applied for the policy, Mohammad filed an affidavit in his immigration proceedings saying his life would be in danger if he were deported to Israel.

"He was well aware that his past activities, coupled with his illegal entry into Canada, put him at serious risk of physical harm."

Mohammad "hid his past activities" from the insurer, "just as he hid them from the Government of Canada when he sought entry to this country," the court ruling states.

A spokesperson for Manulife said the company does not comment on litigation and cannot discuss specific details of any individual. ■

Mazel Tov Ron Haber!

On behalf of Ve'ahavta's Board of Directors, Staff, Clients, Donors and Volunteers,

We would like to thank **Gary Samuel** for his dedicated and passionate service as Ve'ahavta's Chair of the Board from 2016 – 2019.

We proudly welcome **Ron Haber** as Ve'ahavta's new Chair of the Board.

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MacKay commits to move embassy to Jerusalem

RON CSILLAG
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One day after he was quoted as saying he would not commit to moving Canada's embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, Conservative Party leadership hopeful and former foreign affairs minister Peter MacKay backtracked.

In a tweet on Feb. 4, MacKay said, "It has always been my personal view that Jerusalem is the undisputed capital of the State of Israel and that is where Canada's embassy should be and under my leadership, will be located."

Canada's Jewish community "knows that the Conservative Party stands shoulder to shoulder with them," MacKay tweeted. He said that when he was minister of defence, "I made it clear (that) a threat to Israel is a threat to Canada. I will always stand with one of Canada's closest allies."

It will be important, MacKay went on, "to consult our diplomatic officials at our embassy in Israel to make the necessary preparations for the move."

The statement seemed to signal a change of heart, as only the day before, the Montreal-based online publication the *Post Millennial* quoted MacKay as saying he needed to consult and learn more before deciding whether to move Canada's embassy from Tel Aviv.

"I said that there is a lot of priorities, and I want to hear more about those priorities before I make these pronouncements on a whole range of issues and so we're in this process now - consulting broadly, hearing from experts who are well-informed on these issues, and I'm very much interested in hearing their perspectives and that's what I'm doing right now," MacKay was quoted as saying on Feb. 3.

When the *Post Millennial* asked MacKay under what circumstances he would move the Canadian embassy to Jerusalem, he said, "Well, that's where we need to talk to people and find out what the various perspectives and circumstances would be.

"This is a complicated subject and I'm not in a position to do it, so I can't be presumptuous in making these kind of commitments until I hear from people," the candidate added. "I think that would be understood that consultation just over a week into a leadership contest - it would be rather presumptuous for me to say this is what I'm going to do based on the outcome that's yet to arrive."

Peter MacKay

MacKay said the same thing in a conversation with "members of the Toronto Jewish community," according to an anonymous source at the meeting who spoke to the *Post Millennial*.

The publication noted that "prominent figures in the Conservative movement were quick to criticize MacKay's original position."

MacKay was unavailable for comment on Feb. 4.

Ontario MP Erin O'Toole, a former party foreign affairs critic and MacKay's rival for the leadership, wasted little time in staking out his position on the subject.

"Under Stephen Harper, Canada stood out as a resolute friend of Israel. Sadly, under Justin Trudeau this strong support has weakened. We need a principled Conservative leader who will make Canada a true friend of Israel once again," O'Toole said in a statement posted to Facebook on the same day as MacKay's tweet.

"I have been absolutely clear about this and my views have not changed. Jerusalem is the capital of Israel. The strong presence of the Jewish people there is thousands of years old. But the modern era of Israel the Knesset is in Jerusalem, the Supreme Court, most of the foreign affairs and government ministries in West Jerusalem.

"I believe that we need more of a presence in the ground in Jerusalem. It's crazy that our ambassador has to drive from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem to meet with government officials just to preserve a diplomatic fiction. It's time to recognize reality and move our embassy," O'Toole said.

In August 2018, Conservative Party members approved a resolution recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and advocating moving Canada's embassy there. ■

Montreal suburb adopts IHRA anti-Semitism definition

JANICE ARNOLD
jarnold@thecjn.ca MONTREAL

Westmount City Council unanimously adopted a working definition of anti-Semitism, based on that of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), at its Feb. 3 regular sitting.

The affluent Montreal suburb becomes the second municipality in Canada to adopt the IHRA definition, following Toronto-area Vaughan, which did so on Jan. 28.

That's the same day Montreal Mayor Valérie Plante proposed referring the matter to a standing city committee after opposition leader Lionel Perez tabled a motion for adoption of the definition.

He then withdrew the motion rather than leave it to a municipal body he thinks is "ill-equipped" to undertake such a study.

The issue of anti-Semitism was "top of mind following the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz," Westmount Mayor Christina Smith told *The CJN*.

The motion was introduced by Mary Gallery, one of Westmount's eight councillors, and seconded by Coun. Jeff Shamie.

Westmount Mayor Christina Smith

It states that the City of Westmount is "dedicated to fighting anti-Semitism and discrimination in all its forms."

The decision was applauded by Federation CJA and its advocacy agency, the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA).

"Westmount's adoption of the IHRA definition is an important step in the struggle against anti-Semitism and sets an important precedent for other municipalities on the Island of Montreal," said federation president Gail Adelson-Marcovitz and Rabbi Reuben Poupko, co-chair of CIJA-Quebec, in a joint statement.

"We applaud (Smith and Gallery) for showing leadership and demonstrating the need for action in combating contemporary anti-Semitism."

The federation and CIJA were sharply critical of Plante for shelving Perez's motion, rather than allowing the council to vote on it.

Critics of the IHRA definition, which is not legally binding, charge that it could be used to silence criticism of Israel and advocacy on behalf of Palestinians. Among them is Independent Jewish Voices Canada, which mounted a campaign to dissuade Montreal from passing Perez's motion, including a letter-writing campaign to councillors.

The pro-BDS group continues to press the Montreal council not to backtrack on its stance, while CIJA is conducting a letter-writing campaign of its own urging Plante to change her mind.

Smith said the references to criticism of Israel in the IHRA definition were not discussed, and her council's focus is on denouncing anti-Semitism and the motion is "more simple."

The motion only reproduces the definition's fundamental tenet: "Anti-Semitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities."

She later issued a written statement: "On the occasion of Auschwitz liberation and remembrance day, Westmount wanted to meaningfully commit itself to countering anti-Semitism today.

"As dozens of other governments of different levels around the world, we believe that IHRA's normative definition of anti-Semitism gives our city the appropriate reference tools to clearly identify anti-Semitism in all its forms."

The IHRA definition was adopted by the Canadian government last June. Its description of contemporary anti-Semitism is "the world's most widely accepted definition," says CIJA.

Plante said at the Jan. 28 council meeting that she does not reject the definition's purpose, but stressed that because this is such a "complex" issue in which "every word and every comma counts," it deserves examination in committee, which might result in a definition tailored to Montreal. ■

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FSWC Board of Directors, Chairman, President and CEO express profound sympathy to Koffler family on passing of Marvelle Koffler z"l.

Marvelle and Murray along with Tom and Anna were among the first to advocate for and support the FSWC Tolerance Training Centre and the Tour for Humanity. We are fortunate the Koffler family, including Tiana and Marc, continue to carry forward the legacy of their parents.

May her memory be a blessing.

New study focuses on the victims of anti-Semitism

RON CSILLAG
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A new study seeks to explore Canadians' personal experiences with anti-Semitism and how being victimized has affected their lives.

Rather than count and classify anti-Semitic incidents, the study will attempt to gauge how victims of anti-Semitic hate crimes cope - with emphasis on events on university and college campuses in Ontario and Quebec.

The survey seeks to query at least 1,825 people in Montreal, Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa, London and Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo – places with large universities and colleges and high concentrations of Jews.

Conducted by researchers at the Centre on Hate, Bias and Extremism and the Social Research Centre at Ontario Tech University in Oshawa, the online survey asks 59 questions. It probes respondents' age, residence and levels of income and education, but also asks whether they are visibly Jewish, whether they feel safe in their daily lives, whether they have personally experienced harassment or verbal or physical attacks because they are Jewish, and whether they have modified their lives if they have.

The survey also asks whether incidents were reported to authorities and what the outcome was.

The study emerged from "what we're seeing globally but specifically in Canada in terms of the rise in anti-Semitism (and) the blatancy with which people are feeling more empowered to express anti-Semitic views and then others to act on them," said the study's lead investigator, Prof. Barbara Perry, director of the Centre on Hate, Bias and Extremism and one of Canada's leading experts on right-wing radicalism.

Despite no shortage of studies on anti-Semitic incidents in Canada, including the yearly audit by B'nai Brith, Perry said she was "surprised" to learn that there has been so little research into the precise nature of hate crimes targeting Jews, especially at universities and colleges, and their aftermath.

According to a statement from the research team, the study seeks to:

• Document and describe the experiences of Jewish communities with hate crime, with respect to the extent, nature, context, and impacts of such victimization – including online and offline hate.

Prof. Barbara Perry

• Distinguish ways in which hate crime is experienced by different sectors of the Jewish community, according to such dimensions as location, university attendance, visibility and denomination.

• Identify the needs and expectations of Jewish communities in terms of services and preventative policies.

• Bring awareness to the public, practitioners and policy makers of the implications of hate crime for Jewish communities, thus shaping attitudes, dialogue, and evidence-based policy in support of Jewish communities.

"Considering the significant impact that hate crime has on the lives of individuals and communities, the lack of research examining anti-Semitic hate crime is unacceptable," say the researchers. "This study aims to address this gap."

Researchers in this case seek more esoteric data than customary, including information on the impact and likelihood of reporting personal or property crimes, "but also conversations around what do you see that needs doing and what do we do to engage, to intervene, to challenge anti-Semitism broadly and hate crimes specifically," Perry said.

Respondents will be asked to which authority they reported a hate crime – but also why they did not report one. ■

The survey is available at: bit.ly/2L9mBYz

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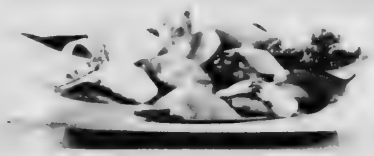

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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
FEBRUARY 13, 2020

School project reunites family separated for 90 years

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A year ago around this time, Gemma Moshal was giving a presentation to the parents of Grade 6 students at Associated Hebrew School's Danilack Campus. She was telling them about the project she had completed the year before, when she was in Grade 6, which had won her a trip to Israel. It was a project about family histories, so the parents would be working on it with their children.

Moshal, who is now a Grade 8 student at the same school, says she wishes she could have given that presentation to the parents just one day later. Why? Because the day after her presentation, her family received a message from a long lost relative living in Siberia who was able to make the connection because of Moshal's work on the project.

That relative, Nadia Fedotov, came to the school on Jan. 29 to present to this year's Grade 6 students about the importance of the project they were working on. The day was part of a longer trip where Fedotov and one of her sons was able to meet her extended family for the first time, after 90 years of separation between the two branches of the family.

From left, Barbara Chonin (Leon's wife), Melissa Moshal (Leon's daughter, Gemma's mother), Ilya Fedotov (Nadia's son), Nadia Fedotov, Leon Chonin, Gemma Moshal and Megan Moshal (Gemma's sister) ALEX ROSE PHOTO

"It's difficult to describe this feeling because our family split apart and we lived as a very little family with very little relations. Just my granny, my mom, me and my brother ... we always felt that there is somebody somewhere who we are related to, but we are not aware of (each other)," Fedotov said. "(My granny) cannot travel so far away, but she feels so happy that we found each other and this lost connection. She was rather depressed after my mom's passing last year. And it really gave her strength and moral support to go on."

Moshal prefaced Fedotov's presentation by explaining how her project had led to the family's reunification. Moshal was one of 50 students from around the world selected by Beit Hatfutsot, the Museum of the Jewish People located in Tel Aviv, to come to Israel to present their projects and participate in workshops. As part of the selection process, Moshal had to upload her family tree to the website myheritage.com. It was there that Fedotov's husband, Artur, who was always on the lookout for lost family connections, recognized the similarities between the families' histories.

Moshal and Fedotov's great-grandparents were brother and sister Edel Chonin and Mera-Sheina Ozur, nee Chonin, respectively. They were separated in 1929, when the 17-year-old Edel, at the urging of his mother, fled from Lithuania to South Africa to escape the violence and forced conscription directed at Jewish men. Edel lost touch with his family when the Second World War broke out, because they had been exiled to Siberia.

But Edel never forgot about his family at the other end of the world - he spent the rest of his life trying to reconnect with them, and passed that desire on to his son Leon Chonin, Moshal's grandfather. He was born in 1945 and, for as long as he can remember, his family was always searching for their long-lost relatives. The International Red Cross tried to reunite the families, he remembers, but it was impossible to communicate through the Iron Curtain.

> "I was just so happy, because it was so many years that I was trying to find them."
>
> **Leon Chonin**

"Their response to us was, 'if they were exiled to Siberia, they would have perished. There's no real hope.' And we lost, that was it. We had to give up," he said. "I thought I'd exhausted every avenue. I didn't know where to go."

He almost couldn't believe the news when he heard that his family from Siberia had made contact.

"I was over the moon. I was just so happy, because it was so many years that I was trying to find them," he said, adding that he's making plans to visit Siberia. "This experience has just been absolutely amazing. It's been a very emotional time for me, because I had no real close family from our father's side ... his sister's family was just lost. And having Nadia with me now, it's such an amazing experience." ■

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Robot brings companionship to sick kids

SUSAN MINUK
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

One of the most devastating side effects of a child falling ill is isolation. While visiting friends can bring much fun and joy, they can inadvertently gift the patient with germs that can overwhelm a compromised immune system. It was for precisely this reason Chai Lifeline Canada launched Zenbo, a companion robot to help brighten the lives of sick children.

Chai Lifeline recently unveiled Zenbo at a news conference in Toronto. The robot, programmed by a team at Ontario Tech University faculty of business and IT, entertains and educates sick kids. The launch was held at the home of seven-year-old Ethan Hayes, who was diagnosed last January with medulloblastoma, a cancerous brain tumour. Ethan went through four brain surgeries, travelled to Memphis, Tenn. for 30 proton radiation treatments and endured seven months of chemotherapy.

"When I was in the hospital, the social worker told me about Chai Lifeline," said Cindi Shoot, Ethan's mother. "They were such a great support, providing meals and a big brother who visited Ethan weekly, and every single time he was in the hospital."

Chai Lifeline Canada supports severely ill children and their families with programs, workshops and counselling of all kinds. Their challenge has been keeping home or hospital-bound kids both free from boredom and up-to-date on their schoolwork.

About Zenbo the robot, executive director of Chai Lifeline Canada Mordechai Rothman explained, "This is an opportunity for us to give a child a friend who can't get that child sick. It doesn't come with any germs, and it's a companion to play with."

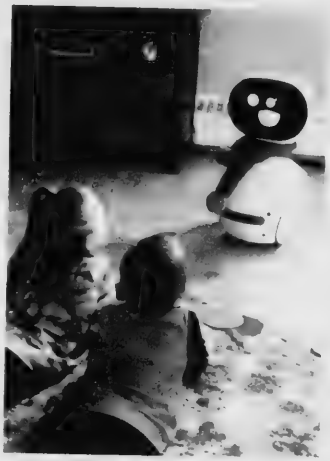
Ethan was home-bound and recovering from cancer until only recently when the family learned he was in recovery.

"He had a scan which was clear," Shoot said. "When you are on the journey of pediatric cancer, it is still a journey."

Kids love robots and young Ethan, together with his sister Chloe are no exception. During the live demonstration, the two were focused, engaged and giggling non-stop while interacting with Zenbo.

"Hello, my name is Zenbo, I'm really excited to meet you. It's a pleasure to meet you Ethan. Thank you for having me here. So Ethan, I heard you are in Grade 2, that's so cool. I hope we can have fun today. I want to be your new buddy. Do you want to hear a joke," Zenbo said. With the children, Zenbo danced, told jokes, shared a story and taught a math lesson by way of baking cookies.

"Zenbo can be tailored to do anything from teaching different languages, to spelling based on the child's age," Rothman said. "What's really special about our collaboration with the university is that we were able to ask Ethan what was his favourite song and what does he like to eat. And we created a support for him to have a good time."



Chloe and Ethan Hayes play with Zenbo, the robot. SUSAN MINUK PHOTO

What makes Zenbo special? Miguel Martin, Ontario Tech University professor and head of the development team explained. "It looks pretty nice with a beautiful smiling oval face, big eyes, round body. It's attractive to kids. Not intimidating at all."

Martin pointed out that the robot could be used for children, adults and elders. "It depends on what applications you put into it. This is the first time we used it with kids. We have been working on it for about three or four months and will learn so much between the interaction between humans and machines. It offers motion sensors, face recognition, proximity sensors. It can remember things about you."

Zenbo was developed in 2016, designed by the Taiwan-based technology company Asus. An artificial intelligence project, it aims to train the companionship robot to feel empathy for humans.

"One of the things we are working on is creating artificial empathy, so the robot gets to empathize with the human, learn their moods based on the vocals and body language," Martin said. "Even by the choice of words, they should know how the human is feeling and then try and help the human in the best possible way."

Chai Lifeline Canada has nearly 600 volunteers helping more than 2,000 family members Canada-wide. They plan to follow the pilot launch with the rollout of additional identical robots later in the year so that more children can benefit. ■

Annual B'nai Brith athletic charity dinner ends

STEVE ARNOLD
SPECIAL TO THE CJN, HAMILTON, ONT

Like an aging athlete who finally realizes his time has passed, a charity event that honoured high school athletes and raised money for community improvements is ending its run.

The B'nai Brith Sports Celebrity Dinner held its last gathering Jan. 23. It was the 69th staging of event that has raised more than $2.6 million since its founding in 1951.

Jeff Paikin, who chaired the event and has been involved in 35 of the stagings, said it simply doesn't make financial sense to continue.

"To go on it has to be good math, but as payback for the effort it requires it has stopped making sense," he said. "If you talk to people in the banquet hall business you see we're not unique in that regard."

At its peak, the annual event would draw up to 1,200 people, including star athletes, but attendance this year was only 740.

Paikin said several forces have piled onto organizers – competition for entertainment time and money, a sharp drop in the number of volunteers willing to work on the event and the slow loss of the independent business community that once supported such efforts.

> *There has been a real erosion of the business community that once would have supported this*
> **Jeff Paikin, organizer**

He noted that when he got involved - fresh out of university – the organizing committee had 22 members. This year there were only "five or six who were dedicated and one or two who were helpful."

During his first year organizing the event it earned $15,000. Three years later proceeds had risen to $150,000 through innovations such as gathering corporate sponsors and staging an auction. Over its life the event grew from a dinner in the basement of the local Jewish community centre to a social hall in the Adas Israel Synagogue to a hotel ballroom to the cavernous Hamilton Convention Centre.

Since then, however, business support has fallen off as the local economy has changed.

"There have been some heavy changes in our corporate demographic, especially in the Jewish community," he said. "There has been a real erosion of the business community that once would have supported this no matter what."

The decision to make the 2020 edition of the dinner the last was announced at the end of the January gala.

"We did that so the focus would be on the athletes and not on us," Paikin said. "Our committee will meet in three weeks to lament a little and see if there is any will to try something else.

"We'll get everybody together in the same room and see what can be done," he added.

As chair of the event, Paikin added he is nursing a personal sense of failure because he couldn't find a way to keep it going.

"I have a real feeling of failure that I couldn't find someone who was passionate enough to take this on and keep it going," he said.

The final edition of the event featured appearances by mixed-martial artist George St-Pierre, of Montreal; golfer Ben Curtis, winner of four major tournaments including the 2003 British Open; Team Canada hockey gold medallist Tessa Bonhomme; baseball and basketball announcers Dan Shulman and Leafs broadcaster Jim Ralph.

Over the years the event has raised money for charities such as the Beth Tikvah Foundation, operator of group homes for developmentally disabled adults; Food4Kids; Bulldogs Foundation and Mohawk College. ■

Anything and everything destroyed

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

To bomb anything they had to bomb everything

By contrast, the U.S. Air Force (USAF) believed in precision bombing of military targets. Its pilots, therefore, flew daytime raids in B-17s which had many guns, thinking that in tight formation they could ward off German fighters. They couldn't.

On a clear and sunny Aug. 17, 1943, for example, the USAF's 100th Bombardment Group, led by Curtis LeMay, attacked the Messerschmitt factory in Regensburg, losing nine of 21 planes. In October of that year, 26 per cent of planes attacking the ball bearing factory in Schweinfurt were lost. This was unsustainable

Meanwhile, Harris, backed by Prime Minister Winston Churchill, continued pulverizing German cities by night, thinking he could break German morale and end the war. He couldn't. In November 1943, he launched what would total 35 major missions comprising 20,244 sorties against Berlin, claiming the loss of 400-500 planes would "cost Germany the war." By March 1944, 1,047 had been shot down, 1,682 damaged and the war raged on according to P.P. O'Brien's *How the War was Won*. By the time Harris got to Dresden, Germany's major cities had been severely bombed, yet it was still fighting tenaciously. (Germans couldn't exactly write their MPs demanding an end to the war.)

The Americans, however, understood the key to victory: destroying the Luftwaffe. To do that they built agile fighter planes with enough range to accompany bombers anywhere in Germany. They decimated the Luftwaffe's fighters and controlled the skies by the spring of 1944, enabling destruction of bridges and other transport infrastructure in Normandy, without which, the invasion might have been repulsed. U.S. bombers then went after German key industries, synthetic oil plants and, importantly, transportation infrastructure without which coal could not be delivered to factories thus rendering them idle. Anything produced could not be shipped to where it was needed.

The collection of Dresden's art museum, one of the world's most important, was removed to various nearby castles at the start of the war. As the Russians approached, the collection in one of the easternmost castles, Schloss Milkel, was to be moved to Schloss Schieritz, north of Dresden.

Feb. 13 was Fasching, a German Mardi Gras, a party day. Thomas Rudert, provenance expert of Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, told me that the driver, instead of going to Schloss Schieritz, detoured to Dresden, parked his truck, went to party with his girlfriend and the bombing started. Hundreds of Old Masters were incinerated: Bordone, Pieter Breughel, Elder and Younger Cranach, van Dyck, Giordani, Giorgone, Durer, Rubens, Tintoretto to name just the best. Also destroyed was Gustave Courbet's Les casseurs des pierres (The Stone Breakers).

The Stone Breakers (1849) by Gustave Courbet was one of hundreds of great paintings destroyed in the bombing.

Two hundred Dresden Jews had not yet been murdered, because they were married to Aryans. Half survived the bombing. The SS building along with its records was destroyed. They tore off their Stars of David and joined the tens of thousands now homeless. The most famous of these was Victor Klemperer, who in 1933 began, as an act of defiance, a diary that he continued until his death in 1961. His daily, real-time recording of life under the Third Reich is fascinating. That day, he recorded he was given the job of delivering notices to some of the remaining Jews to assemble on the 16th for "transportation." He closely observed and described the agonized reaction of each recipient.

The war was almost over, but no one knew it at the time. The Germans had just launched the huge, if unsuccessful, Ardennes Offensive, were inflicting hundreds of thousands of Allied casualties monthly and were the only side with operational rockets, jet planes and a Schnorkel submarine.

It is incorrectly argued Dresden was not a military target. It had 127 enterprises designated by a code, indicating their military importance to Germany. The largest, Zeiss-Ikon, employing 14,000, made military lenses and fuses. These outlying factories, many using forced labour, though not the target, were damaged. Harris said that if he burnt a factory they rebuilt it in six months but replacing a worker took 21 years.

Dresden was a city of immense cultural importance. It wasn't just the architecture. In Meissen, just to the north of the city, in 1710, two Europeans figured out the formula for making Chinese porcelain. In Dresden in 1905, Ernst Kirchner began Die Brucke, forerunner of German Expressionism. Otto Dix and Oskar Kokoschka taught at the Dresden Academy. Dresden's opera continued its high standards throughout the war and when the post of conductor became vacant, Herbert von Karajan, a Nazi since 1935, tried to get appointed.

But what good was Germany's contribution to the canon of Western Civilization if Germany was perpetrating the Holocaust?

High culture continued full throttle during the war, both to show the superiority of the German race and (along with low culture) to mask the barbarism and pretend everything was normal. This is telescoped in a Rundschrieben of the Auschwitz administration published by Sybille Steinbacher and co-authors. It announced a performance at the Auschwitz village set up for SS guards on Feb.9, 1943 of Goethe.

"They (the Volksdeutsche) should know in particular, that the German culture, of which the entire world speaks,... is most of all the artistic expression of the feelings of our poets and thinkers." A search I commissioned in the archives of the Dresden Staatstheater revealed that the leads in the Auschwitz Goethe were an acclaimed singer of the Dresden opera and an honoured actor of the Dresden Staatstheater.

SS guards could attend Goethe in the evening, return next morning to their regular jobs murdering 216,000 Jewish and 11,000 Sinti and Roma children and go home at night to their own adored children, living with them at Auschwitz. As Dante wrote seven centuries ago in "Canto XXVIII" of a different *Inferno*:

It's certain no human tongue could take the measure
Of those enormities. Our speech and mind,
Striving to comprehend them, flail and falter. ■

Murray Teitel is a Toronto art critic. Translation from The Inferno of Dante by Robert Pinsky, 1994, Strauss, Farar and Giroux. In addition to people already named, the author thanks Ilana Arnold for help with research and Lisa Dietrich for translating the Rundschrieben and emails of experts who wrote to him in German.

INTERNATIONAL

PA is not trustworthy, Israeli ambassador says

RAPHAEL AHREN
JERUSALEM

The White House's so-called "deal of the century" strongly favours Israel because it is a democracy that can be relied upon to uphold any agreement, whereas the Palestinians have a long way to go before they are trustworthy partners, U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman said on Sunday.

Critics of U.S. President Donald Trump's peace plan often complain that it grants Israel the right to soon annex the parts of the West Bank that the proposal earmarks for Israel to retain, while the Palestinians would only get their state at the end of four years – and then, only if a long list of conditions have been meet.

If the plan is meant to eventually lead to peace between Israelis and Palestinians, why is one side allowed to take the spoils right away, while the other side has to wait four years, the *Times of Israel* asked Friedman during a briefing Sunday at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs.

In his answer, the U.S. envoy spoke of the need to bridge the "asymmetry" between the State of Israel, which is a dependable ally, and what he described as the failed wannabe state that is the Palestinian Authority. He also argued that Jerusalem would have never have made the concessions it did upon accepting the plan's outline – including agreeing not to build any new settlements in the areas designated for a future Palestinian state – if it had not been granted the right to quickly annex the parts envisioned to be part of Israel.

U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman. OLIVIER FITOUSSI/FLASH90

"This is a completely asymmetric relationship," Friedman said of Israel and the PA. "Israel is a democracy. You can hold it to its word. It has an enormous relationship with the United States on multiple levels and that relationship is very solid. It is in a position today to keep its part of the bargain."

By contrast, the Palestinians are currently "not in a position to keep any bargain," Friedman said. "The Palestinians are not united. Their government is not democratic. Their institutions are weak. Their respect for all types of norms that we hold dear – not just democracy but human rights, freedom of religion, freedom of the press is nonexistent."

The White House felt the need to "bridge that asymmetry," he went on. "If Israel is ready today, why shouldn't they get what they're agreeing to today? If the Palestinians are going to be ready in four years, well, then they can get what they can get in four years."

The only way to encourage the Israelis into agreeing to adopt the Trump plan and to freeze settlement building in the area earmarked for a future Palestine was to "provide them today with what they're entitled to in exchange for that," Friedman posited.

"I have no doubt that Israel would never agree to a naked freeze of four years just on the possibility that the Palestinians might a) be willing to negotiate and b) achieve the milestones [required of them by the plan]. We just couldn't have gotten it," he said.

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Netanyahu says Israel is starting mapping areas to annex

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF
JERUSALEM

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu last Saturday said Israel has begun mapping parts of the West Bank to annex, appearing to back his pledge to swiftly apply Israeli sovereignty over these areas following the publication of U.S. President Donald Trump's peace plan.

"We're already in the process of mapping the territory that according to the Trump plan will be part of the State of Israel," he said at a Likud campaign event in the Ma'ale Adumim settlement town on Feb.8.

"This won't take a lot of time and we'll complete this," Netanyahu added, without further specifying.

Immediately after Trump announced the release of his Israeli-Palestinian peace proposal during a Jan. 28 White House ceremony attended by Netanyahu, the premier told reporters he planned to bring his plan to annex the Jordan Valley and West Bank settlements for cabinet approval within days.

Though U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman initially signalled American support for Israel moving ahead immediately with annexation, White House senior adviser Jared Kushner clarified the next day that the Trump administration expected Netanyahu to wait at least until a new Israeli government is formed sometime after the March 2 vote.

Kushner on Feb.6 said it will likely take "a couple of months" to complete work on detailed West Bank maps before Israel will be able to annex settlements and the Jordan Valley.

Speaking to reporters at the United Nations, Kushner said he and his team would follow up with the announcement shortly that a U.S.-Israeli commission is being established to turn its "conceptual map" into a detailed map with the goal of making sure "you can have contiguous territory" for a Palestinian state.

It can take "a couple of months" for technical teams to come up with a map, Kushner said, and during that time he and his team plan to consult with European and Middle Eastern governments to further explain the plan.

Netanyahu did not clarify Saturday whether the mapping was in co-ordination with the United States or whether the commission had been established.

"There is a lot, a lot of territory and this won't take a lot of time," he said.

Issuing what his Likud party called a "particularly important statement," Netanyahu insisted the Trump administration will back his annexation plans.

"Don't be mistaken, the Americans will go along with this, President Trump will go along with this," he said.

The premier also claimed only he could secure American recognition for Israeli sovereignty over the Jordan Valley and West Bank settlements. "I don't trust [Blue and White chairman] Benny Gantz," he said, referring to his chief political rival.

Gantz met separately with Trump late last month and has expressed support for the U.S. proposal. He promised to apply Israeli sovereignty to annexed parts of the West Bank if he becomes prime minister after the upcoming elections "in co-ordination with the international community."

Following his initial pledge, Netanyahu has since refrained from addressing a timeline for annexation, but at a campaign event last week he urged attendees to help him get re-elected, saying that a victory would allow his Likud party to gain approval for the Trump peace plan.

Those remarks appeared to be an acknowledgment that annexation would not be on the table before the national vote.

Nonetheless, Netanyahu reportedly told settler leaders on Feb. 6 he was still working on some degree of annexation before the elections, according to participants in the meeting. ■

Times of Israel / Timesofisrael.com

Netanyahu vows crushing response to Gaza

JUDAH ARI GROSS
AND **TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF**
JERUSALEM

Amid escalating rocket and incendiary balloon attacks from the Gaza Strip, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned Gazan terror groups that Israel was prepared to take "crushing action" if the attacks continued.

"I want to make this clear: we won't accept any aggression from Gaza. Just a few weeks ago, we took out the top commander of Islamic Jihad in Gaza, and I suggest that Islamic Jihad and Hamas refresh their memories," Netanyahu said at the opening of the weekly cabinet meeting at his office in Jerusalem on Sunday, Feb. 9.

"I won't lay out in detail all our actions and plans in the media, but we're prepared for crushing action against the terror groups in Gaza. Our actions are powerful, and they're not finished yet, to put it mildly."

Defence Minister Naftali Bennett similarly issued a warning to Hamas leaders in Gaza, warning that Israel would take "lethal action against them" if their "irresponsible behaviour" didn't cease.

"Israel does not want a war with Hamas in Gaza, but we are committed to the safety of the residents of the south. The irresponsible behaviour of Hamas's leadership is bringing us closer to taking lethal action against them," Bennett warned in a Hebrew-language video released following his visit to the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) headquarters in the Gaza region on Sunday.

He warned that Israeli military action would be "unbearable" for Hamas.

"We won't announce when or where. This action will be very different from those taken in the past. No one will be immune. Hamas faces a choice: choose life and economic prosperity, or choose terror and pay an unbearable price. Their actions will determine [which it will be]."

A Palestinian man near the Israel-Gaza border prepares to send over an incendiary device attached to balloons into Israel on Feb. 10. ALI AHMED/FLASH90 PHOTO

The comments came the day after Bennett made similar threats in a speech, saying he would aim to avoid sending Israeli troops into Gaza in a future war, but Israel's airstrikes and other responses to terror attacks from Gaza would escalate. He said Israeli strikes following attacks from Gaza were now targeting rocket factories and other Hamas military infrastructure not only in response to rocket launches, but also in reaction to the launches of balloons attached to incendiary devices.

He said he was not interested in more two- or three-day rounds of violence with Hamas. Instead, he was working on plans for a "significant" offensive to be initiated at a time picked by Israel that would fundamentally change the current situation, without elaborating.

If there is no other choice, he added, he would also launch military operations in the more immediate future, from which "nobody in the Hamas leadership will be immune."

The warnings from Israeli leaders come after yet another round of rocket and balloon attacks from Gaza over the weekend, with Palestinian terror groups firing at least one rocket into southern Israel on Saturday night that struck an open field, after which the IDF shelled two Hamas positions in the northern Gaza Strip in retaliation.

According to the Sha'ar Hanegev Regional Council, the projectile caused neither injury nor damage. As the rocket was not heading toward a populated area, it did not trigger sirens in Israeli communities. However, the IDF said, it set off alerts on cellphones in the area.

Earlier on Saturday, a suspected explosive device attached to a cluster of balloons that was apparently launched from Gaza was found in a field in the Merhavim Regional Council. A group of foreign workers who were reportedly not aware the object could be a bomb picked up the balloons, but the device did not explode.

The day before, at least six suspected airborne explosive devices launched from Gaza were found in the south, including what appeared to be the warhead from a rocket-propelled grenade attached to balloons discovered in a field near Kibbutz Ruhama, northwest of Gaza, which police sappers were called to disarm.

Palestinian terrorists in the Gaza Strip began flying explosive and incendiary devices into Israel using clusters of balloons and kites beginning in 2018. The practice has waxed and waned over time, but has picked up considerably in recent weeks, with dozens of these balloon-borne bombs landing in towns and farming communities adjacent to the Palestinian enclave.

The IDF's Home Front Command last Friday released a poem for children warning them against the dangers of the balloon-borne bombs flown from Gaza.

In addition to being attached to colourful balloons, some of the explosive devices have been disguised as other child-friendly objects such as books and soccer balls.

Few injuries have been caused by these airborne attacks, but they have caused extensive damage to Israeli agricultural fields, parks and forests, especially during the country's dry summer months.

Last Thursday, IDF Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. Aviv Kohavi said the military would take a tougher stand against these airborne attacks, along with other types of terrorist activities.

Israeli defence officials believe that the Gaza-ruling Hamas terror group is trying to increase pressure on Israel in a bid to extract greater concessions in ongoing ceasefire negotiations.

Fears have also mounted in recent days of an escalation of violence in Gaza and the West Bank following the release last month of a U.S. peace plan that is seen as heavily favouring Israel. ■

Times of Israel / Timesofisrael.com

Israel never agreed to a four-year freeze of settlement construction

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

The administration took great care to tell the Palestinians that they don't have to say yes or no to the plan right away, Friedman said.

"We understand that you're in a very difficult position – you're not united, you have numerous streams of conflict that weaves around your body politic. So take your time, digest it, and you will not be penalized by the passage of time," he said, addressing the Palestinian leadership.

"If it takes you three or four years to get there, the territory that is earmarked for you, the integrity of that territorial opportunity, will be preserved."

Israel has never agreed to a four-year freeze of settlement construction, Friedman stressed. The only previous moratorium of settlement expansions – for 10 months – took place during the Obama administration and "was a waste of time," he claimed, since it did not succeed in bringing the Palestinians back to the negotiating table.

For Israel to annex the part it will keep now in exchange for refraining from taking more of the territory reserved for Palestine is a formula that "seemed like a very fair trade – for us, for the Palestinians and for Israel," Friedman said.

The *Times of Israel* also asked Friedman what happens after four years – will Israel get a green light to apply sovereignty over the remaining parts of the West Bank if the Palestinians have still not engaged on the proposal?

Not necessarily, Friedman replied.

"At the end of four years, if there is no progress and no basis to extend that period of time – and that would be an extension the parties themselves would have to agree to – then it would return to what it is today," the ambassador said.

The areas Israel will not have annexed by then would continue to be administered by COGAT, the Defence Ministry unit currently in charge of implementing Israeli government policies in the West Bank, according to Friedman.

There is no specific event that would automatically occur at the end of the four years that started on Jan. 28, when the peace plan was unveiled at the White House, he said. "Hopefully there would be another initiative," he added. ■

Times of Israel / Timesofisrael.com

High Court allows MK who praised terrorist to run

JACOB MAGID
JERUSALEM

The High Court of Justice last Sunday upheld the candidacy of hardline Joint List MK Heba Yazbak, overturning a January decision by the Central Elections Committee to bar her from running in the March 2 election over her alleged support of terror.

Efforts to bar Yazbak, a member of the Arab nationalist Balad party in the Joint List alliance, were based on two Facebook posts: one which she shared in 2015 that praised Lebanese terrorist Samir Kuntar, who in 1979 took part in the brutal murder of members of an Israeli family in the northern city of Nahariya; and another that welcomed the end of a nine-year sentence for Amir Makhoul, who pleaded guilty to handing sensitive information to the Lebanese terror group Hezbollah. She was also criticized for statements she made that some have read as condoning violence against Israeli soldiers.

Likud argued in its petition demanding Yazbak's disqualification that the MK "systematically, for years, supported terrorists and spies who have committed horrific crimes against the State of Israel and its residents." Israel's election laws ban anyone who openly supports armed conflict against Israel or incites racism from running for Knesset.

In a 5-4 ruling, the top legal body said that while the posts publicized by Yazbak were inappropriate, there was not a critical mass of statements that justified disqualification. Moreover, the court posited that a significant amount of time had elapsed since Yazbak's most controversial post.

"There was no critical mass of clear, unambiguous and convincing evidence to justify rejection [of her candidacy]," the majority judges wrote, falling in line with the legal opinion of Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit, who had also stated in January that Yazbak should be allowed to run, despite some of her statements being "very severe and repugnant."

Joint List party member Heba Yazbak during the Central Elections Committee discussion to disqualify her from running in the Knesset elections, on Jan. 29. YONATAN SINDEL/FLASH90 PHOTO

The court determined that there was no proof that the posts were a primary feature of Yazbak's political activity or that she aspired to carry out the violence of the terrorists who she praised.

The court decision sparked a rush of angry reactions from right-wing lawmakers.

"Heba Yazbak and her friends should sit in the parliament in Ramallah and not in the Knesset," said Yisrael Beytenu head Avigdor Liberman. "The fact that the court overturned the decision of the Central Elections Commission and allowed Yazbak to run in the upcoming elections is a prize for supporters of terrorism."

The national religious Yamina party said in a statement that "the Supreme Court judges proved once again tonight that they have for a long time now not been occupied with pursuing justice, but with pursuing liberal leftist politics and agendas."

"The authorization of Yazbak, who supported murderers and would not even apologize or repudiate, is a new low for the High Court and the public's confidence in it," the party added.

The leader of the centrist Blue and White party, Benny Gantz, said he believed "Heba Yazbak's statements in support terrorists should have led to her disqualification." But, he added, "We will respect the court ruling."

Regardless, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu used the ruling to attack Gantz.

"From this day forward, Benny Gantz will be reliant on Heba Yazbak who praises terrorists, because without the Joint List, Gantz has no way of forming a government," he said.

Blue and White MK Orna Barbivai said the decision marked a win for Yazbak, but a loss for her majority-Arab Joint List party. "Twenty per cent of the country's citizens," she said, referring to Arab Israelis, "will ask themselves whether a representative who supported abominable murderers can represent their needs in the Knesset and whether they can give their vote to the Joint List."

Further on the left though, lawmakers offered support for the court decision.

Labor-Gesher-Meretz MK Tamar Zandberg argued that the ruling "stems from legal and non-political considerations."

"I call on right-wing lawmakers to accept the verdict and, for a change, not continue with their incitement against Arabs and the courts," she said.

For her part, Yazbak said in a statement that the ruling proved "that the disqualification petitions were part of an incitement campaign against me and against the entire Arab society and its representatives.

"We will continue to work toward ending the occupation, for lifting the siege, for a just peace, for equality and for justice," she added.

Last month, the Central Elections Committee voted 27-7 to disqualify Yazbak, but decisions by the body of representatives of the outgoing Knesset's political factions can always be appealed in the High Court.

Addressing the committee last month, Yazbak called the claims "absurd" and said the attacks against her were "based on racism."

"I have never called for the use of violence. Nor did I intend to praise the use of violence," she said, referring to the Facebook posts. "The only thing connected to violence I've dealt with in my life is the fight against violence."

In a recent interview with Channel 13, she said that "international law permits people under occupation to take action to liberate themselves."

When the interviewer pressed her and asked if she considered attacks on soldiers to be legitimate resistance, she demurred, saying, "What isn't legitimate is the continued occupation."

Almost all of the Knesset's Jewish lawmakers united behind the efforts to ban Yazbak, including the centrist Blue and White party and parts of the left-wing Labor-Gesher-Meretz. ■

Times of Israel / Timesofisrael.com

Sanders says being Jewish shaped his outlook

RON KAMPEAS
WASHINGTON – JTA

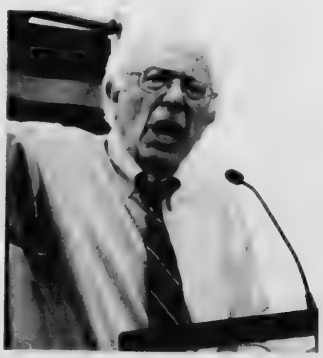
Asked whether his Jewish identity would be "a help or a hindrance" as he runs for president, Bernie Sanders said that his Jewishness is one of the two main factors that shaped his outlook.

The Vermont senator, appearing on a CNN town hall for Democratic presidential candidates broadcast Feb. 6 from New Hampshire, was asked by a local woman about his Jewish identity.

"It impacts me very profoundly," he said. "When I try to think about the views that I came to hold there are two factors. One I grew up in a family that didn't have a lot of money … and the second one is being Jewish."

Sanders recalled as a child reading "big picture books of the Second World War" and "tears would roll down my cheeks" when he saw what happened to Jews.

"At a very early age, even before my political thoughts were developed, I was aware of the horrible things that human beings can do to other people in the name of racism or white nationalism, or in this case Nazism," said Sanders, who also recalled seeing Holocaust survivors in his Brooklyn neighbourhood with numbers tattooed on their arms, and a recent visit to his father's hometown in Poland, where locals took him and his brother to a site where Nazis committed a mass murder of Jews.



Bernie Sanders WIKIMEDIA COMMONS PHOTO

Much of Sanders' extended family perished in the Holocaust.

He said the experiences shaped his views particularly in opposing President Donald Trump and the "divisiveness" that he said Trump promoted.

Sanders, 78, was long reluctant to discuss his Jewish upbringing but began to open up well into his 2016 campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination when he became the first Jewish candidate to win major-party nominating contests.

He has made his Jewish identity a central factor of his 2020 campaign, although he has also drawn criticism for agreeing to have as surrogates activist Linda Sarsour and Rep. Rashida Tlaib, who have been accused of peddling anti-Semitic myths. ■

Jewish Life

OPERA EXPLORES THE TRAGIC LIFE OF FAMED CELLIST

Matt Haimovitz TAPESTRY OPERA PHOTO

TOBY SALTZMAN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

When Matt Haimovitz performs at the world premiere of Tapestry Opera's *Jacqueline: a portrait of virtuosity*, the audience can anticipate music that resonates with the poignant timbre of the famed cellist's intimate association with Jacqueline du Pré as her young protégé.

Rising from a young prodigy herself, to peak fame as one of the world's greatest virtuosi and ultimately succumbing to a tragic finale, English cellist du Pré was recognized in her prime as an exquisitely talented female soloist.

At the heart of du Pré's life, strings a loving relationship with celebrated pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim that blossomed in Israel. The story goes that in 1967 – while the couple were performing concerts before, during and after the Six-Day War – du Pré felt such an overwhelming connection to Judaism as a musician that she converted to Judaism to marry Barenboim. Tragedy struck in 1971 when she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. She died at 42 in October 1987 and was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Golders Green in London.

As Haimovitz explains that the opera portrays du Pré's struggle with an illness that stole her identity, her musical gift and life, his blue eyes reflect a genuine adoration of du Pré simultaneously with his great love for the instrument.

Haimovitz's relationship with du Pré grew from a serendipitous phone call during Passover in New York when he was 13.

He recalls, "(Itzhak) Perlman said, 'Can you come over, because Daniel Barenboim is here and we'd love to play some chamber music.' I took the bus. I played the "Brahms E-Minor Sonata" with Daniel, not realizing the emotional importance of the moment. That was the first time he had played with another cellist since Jacqui had become sick. Daniel was so overwhelmed, he lifted me up, gave me a big hug, and invited me to work with him on various sonata repertoires and concerti. A year later, he invited me to make my European debut as he conducted the English Chamber Orchestra in London at the Barbican."

To prepare for that concert, Haimovitz says Barenboim asked him to spend time with du Pré. "She was very sick, not self-sufficient. I spent a week caring for her, listening to her recordings, watching videos and playing for her. At the time, she didn't know exactly what I was playing, but she had a visceral memory, and instructed me on finger placement and bowing. For several years after that, she attended every one of my concerts in London. We remained close until she passed away."

Haimovitz says their relationship was a symbiotic, musically emotional one. "Jacqui was my ideal artist, from the heart. She transcended technique with organic, natural music. On one level, being with her was inspirational. But seeing someone so vulnerable who once had everything, such power to engage people, and imagining myself through that lens was terrifying, especially being so young and idealistic. I had to put things into perspective."

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Serendipity impacted Haimovitz's life again while studying in the music department at Harvard when he met budding composer and future wife Luna Pearl Woolf.

"Luna is a story teller, completely immersed in the operatic world. She was inspired by the depth of my relationship with Jacqueline to tell the story of Jacqui before it's too late. It's a thrill for me to enter her opera world, where there's the arc of the story with words and music, because mine is usually abstract and instrumental."

Haimovitz says audiences will see du Pré from the first moments where she falls in love with the cello and is mesmerized by it, and how it becomes a part of her, her friend, her lover.

"The sensuality and anger when she can no longer play and feels the cello betrays her with the disease. It's a human, almost biblical story, like Job who has everything taken away and deals with his faith. The story encompasses Jacqui's range of talents. As Toby Perlman, Itzhak Perlman's wife told us recently, "It is no easy feat, because Jacqueline has no reference."

Born in Israel to Romanian parents who took him to concerts, Haimovitz was seven when he was mesmerized by a Russian cellist, the exotic and mysterious sound he produced, and the physical sense of embracing the instrument to produce music by taking bow and hair to the strings.

At 10, Haimovitz impressed Itzhak Perlman, who began mentoring him and introduced him to American cellist Leonard Rose, who became his primary teacher and "model as a human being." In 1984, at 13, Haimovitz debuted as soloist with Zubin Mehta and the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra.

Composed by Woolf, *Jacqueline* features Pulitzer Prize-winning librettist Royce Vavrek and celebrated soprano Marnie Breckenridge as Jacqueline, with Haimovitz as the cello, du Pré's only constant companion. Musically inspired by du Pré's iconic interpretation of the Elgar concerto, the story begs the question: Who are you when all that you are and have known is taken from you? ■

Tapestry Opera's Jacqueline runs at the Betty Oliphant Theatre from Feb. 19 – 23. www.tapestryopera.com.

Luna Woolf and Matt Haimovitz in rehearsals. DAHLIA KATZ PHOTO

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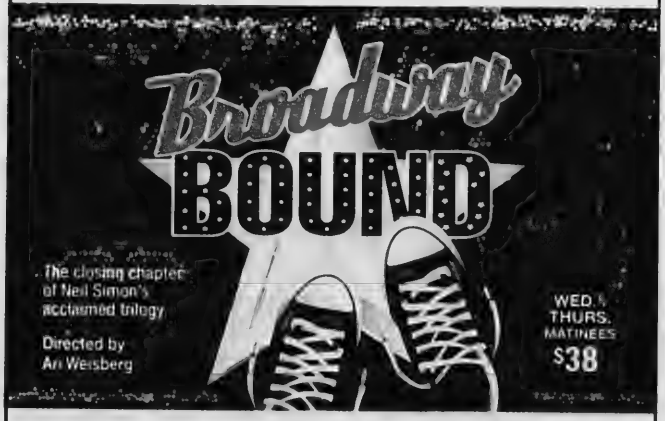

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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
FEBRUARY 13, 2020

Flourishing scene reinvigorates musican's career

RUTH SCHWEITZER
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Toronto's folk and roots music scene is flourishing, with talented performers taking the stage almost every night of the week at the city's clubs.

Award-winning singer and songwriter Glen Hornblast, who's playing at this year's Winterfolk Blues and Roots Festival, is one of the leading players on the scene, at venues like the Tranzac Club and the Free Times Cafe.

As a musician, Hornblast has had his ups and downs. During his high school years at Bathurst Height Secondary School in the late 1960s, he was "into music, poetry and smoking pot," he said. Leonard Cohen, Joni Mitchell and Bob Dylan were his heroes.

He taught himself to play guitar, quit high school and travelled across Canada in the early 1970s, staying at youth hostels. "We'd jam all night and I started playing my own songs and people loved them," he said.

By 1980, Hornblast had released a well-received hit single, called "Northern Skies." He wrote it while he was living on a beach in the interior of British Columbia. He's planning to re-record the song on his yet-to-be-released sophomore album.

Glen Hornblast

"But the '80s weren't kind to folksingers," Hornblast said. His record label went bankrupt, and he went on the road, playing in bars in Ontario, in a duo called Hornblast and (Michael) Kelly.

"We never had a profit because we had to put all our money into our cars and never really got ahead. The other thing was, you had to play cover songs. You'd get to a bar and they'd ask you, 'Do you know any Waylon Jennings?' and if you said no, they said, 'You better know some by tonight' and that's the way it was," Hornblast said.

Some artists might have given up on music, but Hornblast persevered. "I love playing with my fellow musicians, and it's gratifying to be able to share your art with other people and have people say, 'Now that was truth. You really spoke the truth, you really touched my heart with that song,' and that's the payoff we have," he said.

He currently hosts open mics and his own song and poetry events at the Tranzac Club, and he continues to write prolifically, in a range of genres, folk, country, blues and jazz. He's been called one of Canada's top tunesmiths and lyricists by *No Depression*, an online journal of roots music.

"Mary," a song he wrote about a homeless Holocaust survivor he befriended on Bloor Street West in Toronto's Annex neighbourhood, won a Folk Music Ontario's Song From The Heart Award.

"She was there for 15, 20 years, sleeping in alleys, sleeping in doorways. She was a bit crazy, she talked to God. We call that crazy when people talk to God, but I talk to God sometimes. People in the neighbourhood were very kind to her," he said.

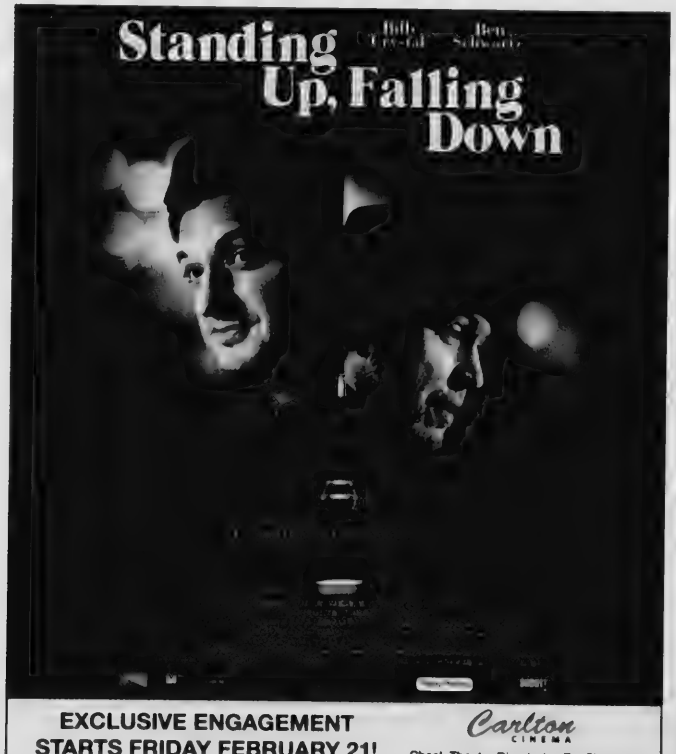
"She didn't talk about her past, so when I wrote the song I couldn't include the details of her life. It was too private for her to talk about. Whatever it was, there was war, there was escape, there was probably family dying, like there was in my family."

Hornblast added that most of his family on his dad's side were Polish Jews who died in the Holocaust.

His song "Freedom Train," about the Underground Railroad, also won a Song From The Heart Award. "I wrote that when I went to Memphis and I went to the National Civil Rights Museum. It was a moving experience, and on the plane home I started writing that song," Hornblast said.

A political left-winger, he said he supports social justice. "That why I've written so many songs about poor people, homeless people, about ordinary people," he said. "The best songs are about experiences from real life." ■

Glen Hornblast is playing at the Winterfolk Blues and Roots Festival, February 21 to 23. Visit winterfolk.com.



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A snapshot of Jewish Zurich

SANDY BORNSTEIN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN, ZURICH

Before starting my private tour of Jewish Zurich, I joined Michel Bollag for coffee at Babi's Bagel Shop just a few blocks from my hotel, the Engimatt City and Garden Hotel. I watched a series of young Jewish mothers push strollers into the small café while Bollag and I casually introduced ourselves. As the former headmaster of one of the community's Jewish schools and an educator in Judaism at the University of Zurich, Bollag is well versed in Jewish history and Jewish life in modern Zurich. With little prior knowledge of Swiss Jewish history, I listened as he gave a primer on the subject.

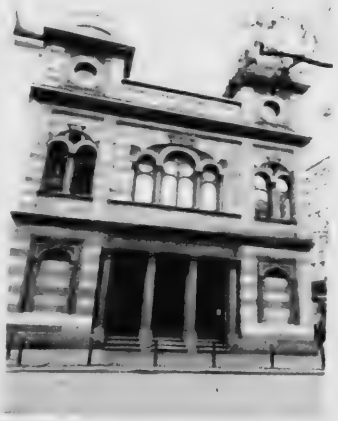
After the Jews of Switzerland were emancipated in 1866, Jews had the freedom to leave the towns of Endingen and Lengnau. For almost 100 years, Swiss Jews were confined to these neighbouring communities. Zurich became one of the top choices for the Jews who wanted to start over in a nearby urban area. Lengnau and Endingen are approximately 30-35 kilometers from Zurich.

Within less than two decades, these Jews established a synagogue in what is now referred to as the Löwenstrasse neighbourhood, which is currently part of the business district. In the late 19th century, eastern European Jews looking for improved conditions in Switzerland sought out Zurich's 4th district.

Today, Zurich is home to approximately 6,000-8,000 Jews who reside in all twelve districts. Affiliated Jews with eastern and western European heritage tend to live in the first four districts where the synagogues, schools, bakeries and kosher stores are located.

Minjan Wollishofen

Our first stop was Minjan Wollishofen, the only homogeneous minyan in Switzerland.



Exterior of Synagogue Lowenstrasse
SANDY BORNSTEIN PHOTO

We walked down a steep ramp to reach the modern building housing this modern Orthodox, Zionist community. From the outside, one would never guess that a sanctuary for approximately 150 families was tucked inside. To respect the privacy and security of this synagogue, I didn't take any pictures of the building's exterior.

The sanctuary had the look and feel of a classroom. Long brown tables with wooden chairs cradled the focal point of the room, the bimah and the *Aron Kodesh*. A sheer curtain separated the men's section in the front from the women's in the rear. Wall-mounted bookshelves filled with Jewish books written in Hebrew and German clung to the walls along the perimeter.

LeShuk

We hopped onto another tram, and four stops later, we arrived near The Shuk, one of two kosher stores in the city. This small supermarket on Waffenplatzstrasse offers take-out service for prepared kosher foods. In addition to the prepackaged items, patrons can choose from an assortment of freshly baked bread and kosher wine. The other kosher store is located in another Jewish section of the city.

Turnhalle Noam

For security reasons, I was unable to take any exterior photos or tour the inside of this modern Orthodox Jewish day school located in the heart of Zurich. Bollag spoke freely about the education that his adult children received years ago at this government accredited school, currently attracting a diverse group of Jewish students.

Synagogue Löwenstrasse Zurich

On the corner of Löwenstrasse and Nuschelerstrasse, sits the stately Moorish style 19th-century synagogue connected to the Israelitische Cultusgemeinde Zürich (the main Jewish community). It is hard to miss the beige and red-striped building with two towers. As we were entering the building, Bollag reminded me that this is Zurich's oldest synagogue.

Inside the wooden sanctuary, desks with straight back wooden chairs are anchored into a wood plank floor. The plain white walls with evenly spaced stained glass windows stand in sharp contrast to the ornately decorated synagogues in Lengnau and Endingen.

Old Jewish Quarter and Synagogengasse

After spending a few hours sampling modern Jewish life, little time was left to see the remnants of where Jews lived in the Old City during the Middle Ages. If I was in town for an additional day, I would have participated in a highly recommended walking tour designed to piece together the fragments of Zurich's medieval Jewish history. I did have time to meander for a short while through the narrow streets. Bollag directed my attention to a street sign, Synagogengasse and translated a plaque written in German recalling the community and its synagogue.

I followed Bollag into an apartment building and up a stairwell where we looked upon segments of a colourful mural with Hebrew lettering dating back to the 14th century. Since the discovery in the 1980s, archeologists and Jewish historians have worked to preserve the artwork. When asked about the artwork's significance, Bollag mentioned that experts use this piece to illustrate how some affluent Jews were part of the upper echelons of medieval society.

Agudas-Achim Synagogue

Walking toward the Agudas Achim Synagogue, we passed small groups of Hasidic Jews. For over a century, these traditional Jews have lived in Zurich and created communal institutions to meet their needs. A second kosher store serves this community.

Male and female congregants of Agudas Achim have separate entrances to the modern building on the corner of Erikastrasse and Westrasse. Many of these Jews can trace their ancestry to the Eastern European Jews who immigrated from Poland, Russia, and the Baltic states near the end of the 19th century.

Jewish institutions and synagogues support an active Jewish presence in Zurich. Even though my tour included only a sampling of the communal infrastructure, I witnessed a revitalized Jewish community far removed from earlier Jewish history. Unlike Lengnau and Endingen, where the respective communities abandoned their synagogues, Zurich has numerous institutions meeting the needs of its diverse Jewish population. ■

Sandy Bornstein has an MA in Jewish studies. Swiss Tourism and Zurich Tourism jointly hosted Bornstein during her two-night stay in Zurich at the Engimatt City & Garden Hotel.

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Novel is a deep dive into life in occupied France

MORDECHAI BEN-DAT
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

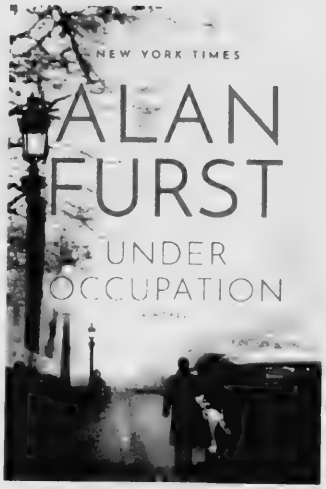
Readers familiar with Alan Furst's books will be grateful for the opportunity to read *Under Occupation*. It is his latest work, the 15th in an impressive body of historical spy novels that depict life in Europe in the years just before and during the Second World War.

The title tells us that we are about to enter the taut, disquieted world of life under occupation. The place is France, more specifically, Paris in 1942. The occupiers are the dreaded Nazis.

"In December 1942," Furst writes, "France was a land of the fugitive. Jews in hiding wanted to get to Spain and, eventually, to New York or Palestine. Agents of three countries, France, Poland, and Britain, were constantly on the move, working across borders in and out of the country. Then there were the people who could no longer bear living under occupation: Had the man at the next café table been a Gestapo agent? Or was he just nosy? He had surely tried to listen to the conversation. Also there were the usual refugees … This was, taken altogether, a considerable number of people who wanted to be somewhere else."

The movement – often collision – of these fugitives from scene to scene is the dramatic forward motion of the novel, superbly paced and marvelously overlapped like a kaleidoscope of dark moods crashing into the infinite beauteous aspects of the famed City of Light.

Furst's literary strength is once again fully on display. He is masterful in creating the full texture of a place. He recreates the streets, shops, cafes and living quarters and even the sky and the clouds of Paris. And then populates his artistic tableau with many diverse individuals around whom he weaves his dramatic and suspenseful yarn.



Under Occupation
By Alan Furst
Random House, 2019

Paul Ricard is the protagonist of the story. In a mirror reflection, one suspects deliberately cast by Furst, Ricard is a writer of detective and spy fiction. Perhaps playfully, Furst describes Ricard as a renowned writer, "a master of the form," whose novels are "written with a sharp eye and a big heart." Furst may indeed have had himself in mind in describing Ricard. And why not? The self-regard is well-earned. And the twisting of plot and story lines in Ricard's books match the many narrative detours and turns awaiting the reader in Furst's.

The story pulls the reader forward immediately. In the story's opening pages, while Ricard is leaving a bookstore, he is accidentally knocked down by a man being pursued by the police. The man is ultimately shot by his pursuers but before he dies, he thrusts a piece of paper into Ricard's shirt pocket. Ricard eludes the investigating police and the Gestapo and then attempts to settle his nerves and calm his racing heart by finding quiet shelter in a coffee house. The paper entrusted to him by the dying man appears to be a blueprint for a new weapon.

This incident effectively becomes the alchemic device by which Ricard changes from a writer simply trying to make a living and survive the war unscathed, into a writer who chooses a side and becomes a member of the resistance. The chance encounter between the fleeing man and Ricard is now the moral fulcrum on which his sense of duty and purpose balance.

"Still it (the occupation) was there: strolling German officers with their French girlfriends, Vichy types with their lapel pins of the Francisque, the double-bladed battle axe. The sight of such lapel pins inflamed his heart. All his life, Ricard had been a peaceable sort, conflict upset him, but now he would have to fight; he'd avoided, like most Frenchmen, the idea of resistance, avoided it for two years, waiting for rescue, waiting for the Americans, as people put it, but he couldn't wait any longer because it would, in time, damage his soul. No, he told himself, he couldn't just write something hostile about the Germans, he would need to do something. To act."

And so the story of *Under Occupation* truly begins.

Ricard does indeed act. He seeks out individuals who might help him deliver the important blueprint to the appropriate hands in Britain. The search sets him on a path of many intersections and crossroads – literal and moral.

Furst paves that path with historical information about the war, the nations and the peoples who were swept up in the war's maelstrom. With his trademark descriptive excellence, Furst situates his protagonists – and the readers – in many unsettling predicaments, dangerous stops along that path.

Ricard must travel to Germany. As he arrives, "a light wind toyed with the red-and-black swastika flags, and the passengers, leaving the train for document control, knew they were in Germany now, so they didn't say much, or spoke in undertones. A kind of hush, on the German side of Emden, where guards in Wehrmacht uniform watched the passengers carefully while their Alsatian shepherds strained at their leads: chains attached to broad leather collars. They had been trained to attack civilians and they wanted to do it."

Deftly, sparingly, without emotional stretch or embellishment, Furst artfully describes the horrifying potential menace awaiting some of the passengers on the train. Readers are chilled even as the individuals in the story constantly avert their eyes from the occupiers: police, officials, soldiers, Gestapo, SS.

Variations of menace and threat confront Ricard throughout the story. But he and the other men and women who also join these efforts persevere, though daunted. Sometimes they doubt the wisdom of their decisions. "In his heart," we read of Ricard, "what he really wanted was to run away – he'd been trapped, trapped by what now seemed a foolish desire to help the war effort … Why had he not understood that, in these times, the idealist would pay a stiff price."

But it is precisely Ricard's perseverance, despite doubt and self-censure, that creates the portrait Furst wishes us to hold in our minds if not also in our hearts. It is the depiction of true heroism: the defiance of "ordinary" men and women who try to ensure through their acts, that idealism does not die. ■

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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
FEBRUARY 13, 2020

Civil liberties debated in revival of popular play

MICHAEL FRAIMAN
mfraiman@thecjn.ca

Dave Carley STEPHANIE HANNA PHOTO

When Dave Carley first wrote *Taking Liberties*, the liberal consensus on censorship was simple: it was bad. Civil liberties, he believed, were timeless. Everyone had a right to express their opinions. Radical hate speech was confined to fringe mailing lists and veiled newspaper ads. Broadly speaking, freedom of speech applied to everyone.

That was 1990.

"The last two or three years have kind of discombobulated me completely," the playwright tells *The CJN* over the phone from his home in Toronto.

For that reason, he wanted to revisit his play, which premiered at the 1992 Vancouver Fringe Festival after a staged reading co-produced by CBC Radio Drama. The one-act spotlights five characters in 1955, all loosely linked and struggling with perceived ethics around personal freedoms: a professor speaks out against gendered affirmative action; a Jewish lawyer prepares to defend a Holocaust denier in court, despite blowback from his friends and family; a young woman argues against literary censorship; a newspaper editor debates whether or not to print the names of criminals; and a young father is arrested for having sex in a public washroom.

This month, local theatre director Cecily Smith is helming a remount of *Taking Liberties*, which will be staged at the historic Campbell House Museum in downtown Toronto. A Q&A series will accompany select performances; on Feb. 15, the production will be followed by a conversation with author Bernice Eisenstein and Daniel Panneton of the Neuberger Holocaust Education Centre.

The revival was Carley's idea, inspired by the cultural shift in attitudes toward censorship and the ways in which the Internet has changed the debate. In the '90s, he says, because hate speech was far easier to control and monitor and free-speech activists didn't worry too much about arguments from the radical right. Today, an un-muzzled rise in extremism has given him second thoughts.

"Does the Internet change the underlying values of being opposed to censorship?" he asks. He's genuinely curious if this work, which was deliberately written to be timeless, is now out-dated. "I'm wondering if people will, at the end of the play, say, 'That's wrong now. Things have changed.'"

However, not all aspects of the script have changed. Specifically, he points to Hayden Finkelshtain, the actor playing the Jewish attorney tasked with defending a Holocaust denier, despite the character's own parents being survivors. Carley wrote the role based on Alan Borovoy, the Canadian lawyer and human rights attorney who helmed the Canadian Civil Liberties Association for years.

"It's tough for Hayden," Carley says. "It's not a popular view. Thirty years ago, when Alan Borovoy did it, without the Internet, Holocaust denial wasn't such a threat, in a way. I do think it's a much bigger threat now."

Finkelshtain himself admits that "taking a nuanced perspective feels scary" in 2020, when an intensely polarized political landscape forces people to take sides. But that is also, he says, a testament to the value of the play and the power of the writing, which discomfited him with its strong arguments in favour of absolute free speech.

"It was tricky for me, because as an actor you have to have an intricate understanding of everything you're saying," he says. "In sitting with this stuff, I agree with all of it - but it's not so much that I would agree or disagree. I think now, politically, things are so polarized that to take everything from a nuanced, detailed perspective - it feels scary."

Carley isn't deeply involved with this new production, but from what he's seen, he's fascinated by how committed the younger cast members are toward social justice - even if it means justifying censorship, which is the central philosophical struggle of the play.

"There is definitely a generational difference," he says. "They seem a lot more certain than I am." ■

Taking Liberties runs from Feb. 5–23 at the Campbell House Museum. For tickets, visit takingliberties.ca.

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You probably won't like Uncut Gems, and that's the point

Michael Fraiman

If you follow the entertainment world, you've probably heard that Adam Sandler was snubbed at this year's Academy Awards. The comic's latest dramatic foray in *Uncut Gems*, a 135-minute migraine of a film, in which the Sandman plays an aggressively obnoxious New York jewelry dealer named Howard Ratner hounding to turn a small fortune into a bigger one, generated buzz among critics' circles about a possible Oscar nod. He won several critics' association awards, despite a weaker industry PR campaign, which actually makes the difference when it comes to the heavily politicized Oscar-nomination process.

So great was the hype around *Uncut Gems* that when it was finally released on Canadian Netflix on Jan. 31, I eagerly watched it that weekend, having no idea what to expect.

And here's the thing: I did not particularly enjoy watching *Uncut Gems*.

It wasn't just because my wife hated it (an opinion shared by other women I know, since most of the few women onscreen, most of whom look like models, are inexplicably drawn to Howard, seemingly hypnotized by his dark shades and crooked grin), but also that the film, like the character, is deliberately ugly and annoying.

This grey and gritty depiction of New York, directed by brothers Josh and Benny Safdie, is divided between arrogant opulence and degraded desperation, casting a whole slew of talented actors (including Lakeith Stanfield and newcomer Julia Fox) on the crappier side, inviting audience members to simultaneously root for and harshly judge the lousy fraudsters and cheaters.

The film snowballs into an undeniably engrossing wreck, with moments of jaw-dropping tension as you just wish Howard, this moron, would make smarter decisions. Spoiler alert: he doesn't. It's not in his nature. And that's the point of the film.

As an audience member, I hated *Uncut Gems*. As a critic, I loved it. That is to say, if someone were to watch this film dispassionately - solely appreciating the directors' nuanced manipulation of high-speed, dark-lit cinematography and rabid dialogue - they'd find endless joy in analyzing every Easter egg (or Passover *afikoman*, in keeping with the film's central Passover scene). Every gaudy set piece and costume choice, exemplified by Howard's heavy gold rings and neon-lit apartment, prove that nothing is beautiful simply because it costs too much. Indeed, value itself is subjective: the cost of Howard's prized black opal, a central object of desire in the film, is hotly debated.

> "...was less impressed ... it's a really annoying movie"

But, as I watched *Uncut Gems*, just because I wanted to watch what I was told was a great film, I was less impressed. It's a really annoying movie. Audience members with less patience for multiple characters shouting over one another and ultimately driven to do horrible things to each other will probably zone out, not caring enough about the characters to engage in the painful anti-capitalist parable. It's not a movie that is meant to be enjoyed. It's meant to be endured.

In that respect, given that the Academy was literally created to celebrate Hollywood fluff, it's not at all surprising that Oscar voters would deliberately overlook this challenging art-house piece. This is the same group of people who voted *Green Book* to win best picture last year, a treacly "racism-is-bad" story, over an objectively better and slower film like *Roma*.

Sandler himself hopefully doesn't care much about the Oscars - he's likely resigned himself to being the kind of actor the Academy doesn't take seriously. And even if he were nominated, let's be real: Joaquin Phoenix deserved to win, so the whole thing's kind of moot.

Most audience members, Academy voters included, probably felt like the mobsters in Howard's vestibule near a pivotal third-act scene. Three men find themselves trapped between bullet-proof glass and a heavy steel door, panicked at the thought of being forced to spend hours with this horrible man making bad decisions. For all the film's metaphors, that one's probably the most apt. ■

Adam Sandler, right, was snubbed at the Academy Awards. NETFLIX CANADA PHOTO

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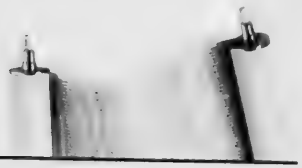
Parashah

Yitro | Exodus 18:1-20:23



Joshua Schwartz studies the meaning of revelation
Rabbi Avram Rothman says in a time of indifference, seek inspiration
Rachael Turkienicz explains how the Sinai experience echoes loudly in the 21st century

Joshua Schwartz

It seems there's a prerequisite for revelation. In the days leading up to Sinai, God implies that it is only now, post-Exodus, that Israel is ready to receive God's word. "You saw what I did to Egypt … now, if you hear My voice." (Ex. 19:4-5) It is only after directly experiencing God's interventions that Israel is deemed ready to receive the Torah. The very faculties of their senses needed to be prepared to take in this wondrous event.

And yet, when revelation actually occurs, the Torah notes the people's inability to bear it sensorily. In the latter recounting of revelation, the people stammer, "What mortal could hear the voice of God and live?" (Deut. 5:23) In contrast to the direct witnessing of divine acts in Egypt, here the experience of revelation is jumbled and chaotic. Rabbi Ishmael, in the midrash, describes Sinai as a synesthetic experience, in which senses were overwhelmed, seeing sounds and hearing sights. If our senses had been readied by God's wonders in Egypt, why was Sinai still so confusing? Does that challenge, even undermine, our reception of God's word?

The commentator Sforno says we are missing a sensory organ. "The people saw the sounds, like a heart 'sees.'" That is, the experience at Sinai was not merely a spectacle, an extravagant display of Divine power. We were not meant to merely see a display of God's might, but to peer into what it means. It is a feature of revelation, distinguishing it from human speech, that it contains more than what it seems. In Egypt, the people learned not to reduce what they experience to merely that which they could perceive, but rather to see all as signs and wonders, revealing more as we contemplate it. They had learned to see in not seeing.

A Hasidic teaching states that the only thing Israel heard directly was the first letter of the first commandment, the *aleph* of *Anochi* (I am). But the *aleph* is silent, so what could they have heard? The *aleph* is the silent edge that borders all that we hear, the potential of what more there is to be revealed. They learned to hear what more there is to hear; so may we all. ■

Joshua Schwartz is the spiritual leader of Beth Lida Forest Hill Synagogue.

Rabbi Avram Rothman

The parashah opens by telling us that Yitro, the father-in-law of Moshe heard. The commentator Rashi asks, what was it that Yitro heard and caused him to come? He then answers that Yitro heard about the splitting of the Reed Sea and the amazing war with Amalek.

By opening this parashah with the statement that Yitro heard, the Torah seems to be telling us that Yitro's hearing and coming was a big deal. But really, wouldn't anyone who heard that the Reed Sea split for the Jews and that they fought a war against a vicious enemy and not a single Jew was killed, be moved by the enormity of those occurrences? What made Yitro so special that the Torah has to tell us this story? Who among us would not be inspired by hearing such miraculous stories?

Certainly anyone would be affected by the news of these amazing miracles. However, the difference with Yitro and pretty much everyone else is that he did not just hear about these miracles, he did something about it. As Rashi adds, "He came." He acted on his inspiration. That is what the Torah found so important.

Today we live in a time of indifference. We see amazing things happen before our eyes. We see wonderful things and, sadly, we see horrible things. We read about terrorist attacks, anti-Semitism and violence and take another sip of our coffee, bite of our bagel and turn the page of the newspaper. Yitro is teaching us that when we hear something, we have to allow it to affect us and do something about it. With the amount of violence against Jews today even we start to become callous.

It is up to us to do something about it. To stand up, to put ourselves on the line and do something.

The Torah is telling us that it is not enough to hear what is happening in the world, we have to act.

Let us be like Yitro who did not just hear what was going on around him, he acted. Talk does little, it is action that the Torah commands of us.

May our inspiration lead us to act and our actions lead us to change the world into becoming a place where we all can live together peacefully. ■

Rabbi Rothman is the senior rabbi of the Aish Thornhill Community Shul in Toronto.

Rachael Turkienicz

In this week's Torah reading, Yitro, Israel is standing at Mount Sinai experiencing the revelation of the Ten Commandments. It is the culmination of everything that has happened up to that moment, as well as the blueprint for everything Jewish to come. The Ten Commandments will form the basis of all Jewish law and eventually inform most of western secular law.

But, it is tradition that tells us there were only ten commandments given at Sinai. When we count the number of commandments communicated at that moment in the Torah, it far exceeds ten. We rely on the chain of tradition to tell us how we define that event for the Jewish people and so we all agree with the interpretation that says there were ten.

Yet, the Talmud, the midrash and all of the commentaries agree that perhaps we can try and understand what God said, but we are far from understanding what people heard. A well accepted midrash confirms there were six hundred thousand people standing at Sinai who heard six hundred thousand different things. Ten Commandments were spoken, but six hundred thousand interpretations were heard. They all originated at Sinai so they are all authoritative.

And the mystical reading adds another layer. Every soul of every Jew yet to be born is embedded into those at Sinai. Now the number of things heard becomes astronomical. But endless layers of meaning does not validate endless personal standards of behaviour. Jewish law and tradition will define a latitude of Jewish behaviour but it will never constrain Jewish thought.

As we move further into the 21st century, we do not move away from the revelation at Sinai but deeper into that experience. The Sages stated that conflicting truths can both be the words of the living God. Judaism is comfortable with multiple truths when we remember that we share our Jewish expressions to enrich each other, not to win an argument that never existed. ■

Rachael Turkienicz is executive director of Rachael's Centre in Toronto, rachaelscentre.org.

Social Scene

Alon Ben-Gurion

Shimmy Wenner, Eric Beutel, Mitchell Oelbaum, Jeff Kaye and Mark Mendelson

Parlour Meeting with Alon Ben-Gurion

TORONTO

Canadian Associates of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (CABGU) Ontario welcomed Alon Ben-Gurion, grandson of Israel's first prime minister, at a private meeting for CABGU supporters and friends. Alon shared anecdotes and memories of his grandfather. Special guest was Jeff Kaye, vice-president for public affairs at Ben-Gurion University. ■

Sara and Darren Gottlieb

Nathan Roth, Naomi Oelbaum and Aubrey Dan

Micki Mizrahi and Shimmy Wenner

Dorit Mevorach and Alon Ben-Gurion

Sam Cordes, Mark Mendelson and Stephen Altbaum

Alon Ben-Gurion and Tamara Fine

Gary Fine and Mitchell Oelbaum

Penny Offman, Annette Oelbaum and Gil Palter

AVITAL ZEMER PHOTOS

What's New

FEB. 13 - 20

by Lila Sarick

We're not waiting

A photograph from the exhibit *We're Not Waiting*, about people living with Ehlers Danos Syndrome. The photos by Chorong Kim are on display at the Miles Nadal JCC gallery until Feb. 26.

Thursday, Feb. 13

LUNCH AND LITERATURE
Philippa Sheppard discusses the novel *The Weight of Ink*, 1 p.m., Beth Emeth. $25.

Sunday, Feb. 16

JEWISH STORYTELLING GUILD
Open mic for tellers and listeners of traditional and personal Jewish stories, 7:30 p.m., Congregation Habonim, 5 Glen Park Ave. $5 or PWYC. Details: jewishstorytelling@gmail.com; 416-633-7765.

JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY
Simon Kreindler discusses "Sugar, Slavery and the Sephardim of the Barbados, 1654-1934," 10:30 a.m., Shaarei Shomayim Congregation, 470 Glencairn Ave. $5 for guests. Details: info@jgstoronto.ca; 647-247-6414.

LEARN ABOUT CLASSICAL MUSIC
Howard Mednick discusses "You Don't Have to be Jewish to Like Classical Music (But it Helps)," first in a three-part series at Congregation Darchei Noam, 7 p.m. $15 per session, $40 for the series. Tickets: darcheinoam.ca

YOUNG TORAH HEROES
Learn about young Torah heroes through stories, songs and crafts, 12:45 p.m., Chabad of Markham. Must register at chabadmarkham.org/youngheroes.

Deadline:
The deadline for the Feb. 27 paper is Feb. 17. All deadlines are at noon. Phone: 416-391-1836 ext. 269; email: **whatsnewcjn@gmail.com**.

Monday, Feb. 17

FAMILY DAY YARCHEI KALLAH
Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner discusses "The Halakhic Cost of Breaking a Verbal Agreement." Breakfast and intro at 9:15 a.m., followed by havruta time. Shiur at 10:30 a.m., Yeshivat Or Chaim. Register at torontotorah.com/yk.

Tuesday, Feb. 18

TUESDAY STUDY GROUP
Storyteller **Anna Kerz** is the speaker at a Women of Adath study group breakfast at 9:30 a.m. $10 per session for non-members. Info: **Marjorie**, 416-780-9156.

TUESDAYS WITH LARRY
Beth Tikvah shows the film *The Real Fauda*, 1:30 p.m., $5. Each film includes an introduction and commentary by **Larry Anklewicz**.

LUNCH AND ENTERTAINMENT
Rudy and **Ester** perform at Beth Emeth, 12:30 p.m., $12. Register at 416-633-3838.

BEACH HEBREW INSTITUTE
Dena Taylor discusses "100 Years at the Beach: A History of the Beach Hebrew Institute," 7 p.m., 109 Kenilworth Ave. Free.

ANTI-SEMITISM TOOLBOX
Dr. Stanley Herman, with Magen David Adom, demonstrates how to control bleeding and use tourniquets, 7-9:30 p.m., Chabad Romano, 10500 Bathurst St. Register at eventbrite.ca. $20.

Wednesday, Feb. 19

JEWISH SPIRITUALITY SEMINAR
Rabbi Michael Skobac discusses "Everyday, Down to Earth Spirituality," 7:30 p.m., Village Shul. Free. RSVP: 416-789-0020, or carol@jewsforjudaism.org.

DANGEROUS IDEAS
Rabbi Louis Sachs discusses "Dangerous Ideas and Rabbinic Censorship," 7:30 p.m. Beth Tikvah.

AUTHOR TALK
Gila Green speaks to Na'amat Canada Toronto, 7:30 p.m., Borochov Cultural Centre, 272 Codsell Ave. RSVP: 416-636-5425; toronto.info@naamat.com.

POMEGRANATE GUILD
Stacey Sproule teaches about the tradition of Sashiko embroidery, 7:30 p.m., Beth Emeth, 100 Elder St. Register at eventbrite.ca

JEWISH SOCIAL JUSTICE
Rabbi Jordan Helfman discusses "Jewish Social Justice," in a three-part series, 7:30 p.m., Holy Blossom Temple. $10 per session for non-members.

ROSH HODESH FOR TEEN GIRLS
Holy Blossom Temple offers a Rosh Hodesh group for teen girls, focusing on Jewish identity, leadership skills and friendship, 7 p.m. Details: lbaumal@holyblossom.org.

Thursday, Feb. 20

BIBLICAL CREATION
Prof. Carl Ehrlich discusses "Biblical Myths of Creation," 7:30 p.m., Holy Blossom Temple. $10 for non-members. Register at holyblossom.org.

THE ESTHER SCROLL
Seymour Epstein offers a "radically new interpretation" of the Book of Esther, 7:30 p.m., Beth David.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Et Cetera

CANCER SUPPORT

Cancer support for Jewish women, including social programs, educational events and resources can be found at the L'Chaim Cancer Support Group for Jewish Women. Info: 416-630-0203, or lchaim@ncjwctoronto.org

BRUNCH WITH AUTHORS

Jennifer Robson and **Anne Dublin**, winners of the 2019 Canadian Jewish Literary Awards, speak at Beth Tikvah, Feb. 23, 10 a.m. $25/$30. RSVP by Feb 18, 416-221-3433

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

- Baycrest is looking for volunteers contact 416-785-2500 ext. 2572, or volunteer@baycrest.org
- Beit Halochem, Aid to Disabled Veterans of Israel is seeking hosts to welcome veterans into their homes this spring. Details: 905-695-0611, or beithalochem.ca

For Seniors

- **Bernard Betel Centre**, 416-225-2112. Feb. 16, Concert on the big screen, **Andre Rieu**, 1 p.m., $4/$8; Feb. 18, **Lily Kovan**, author of *Lily's Tales*, speaks at 10 a.m., $4.25/$8.50; Feb. 20, wellness lecture on "Elder Abuse," 1:30 p.m., free.

- **Association of Jewish Seniors. Rabbi Michael Skobac** discusses "I Was a Jewish Anti-Semite," Feb. 20, breakfast at 9:30 a.m., Shaarei Shomayim. $3 for non-members. Details: **Rozlin Laber**, 647-340-7961

- **Earl Bales Seniors Club 65+ In the Park.** The club has reopened after renovations. Contact **Valerie**, 416-395-7881.

Prosserman JCC

Donald Gales Family Pavilion on the Sherman Campus, 4588 Bathurst St., 416-638-1881 ext. 4020; prossermanjcc.com.

- Sign up for the Birthright JCC Fitness Experience, for people 21-26 at Israelforfree.com.
- Shalom Singers Choir, a non-auditioned choir that performs in the community meets Mondays at 2 p.m.; supervised mah-jong meets Wednesdays at 1 p.m.; drop-in duplicate bridge, Thursdays at 12:30 p.m.
- Ongoing programs include Israeli folk dancing, choir, Yiddish conversation and more.

Miles Nadal JCC

750 Spadina Ave., 416-924-6211, mnjcc.org.

- Valentine's jazz concert featuring the Ault Sisters, Feb. 13, 1 p.m., followed by reception at 2:30 p.m. $12.
- Disability on Film with critic **Angelo Muredda**, Feb. 20, 7 p.m. $10. Tickets on eventbrite.ca
- Toronto Jewish Film Society presents *The Rape of Europa*, with guest speaker **Bernice Eisenstein**, Feb. 23, 3 p.m., Hot Docs Cinema, 506 Bloor St. W. Tickets at eventbrite.ca. $12.50
- Bust a Move Dance Party, Feb 22, 5 p.m. for people 16-30 with developmental disabilities or ASD. $10
- Access-First Musical Theatre, Mondays starting Feb. 24. Musical theatre program for people 18-30 with developmental disabilities or ASD. Details: graces@mnjcc.org
- MNJCC sing-along, no conductor, no sheet music, guitar accompanist **Nathan Hiltz**, March 11, 1 p.m.
- Strength of Self, alternating Mondays, 11 a.m. A program for women who have experienced abuse. Call ext. 147.
- Shabbat Song Circle, Fridays at 10:30 a.m., for children up to age 4 with an adult. Ext. 390.
- *We're Not Waiting*, photos of people with Ehlers Danlos Syndrome, in the Gallery at the J until Feb. 26. *When I Walk Among Trees*, photos by **Theresa Bryson**, on the third floor until March 1.
- **Seniors Arts and Culture**, ext. 155, lisar@mnjcc.org. **Rivka Campbell** discusses "Jews of Colour and the Jews of Jamaica," Feb. 20, 1 p.m. $5. Celebrate Shabbat in Song with **Isaac Muzikansky** and **Alexander Veprinsky**, Feb. 28, lunch at 12:30 p.m., ceremony at 1 p.m. Free, register at ext. 0
- **Seniors Fitness**, ext. 521. Start Here, a free community wellness integration program designed to provide peer support, community engagement and learning and recovery opportunities. Agency referral required. Call ext. 574.
- Michael Bernstein Chapel holds services Thursdays at 7:15 a.m. and Sundays at 8 a.m. Info: **Coleman**, 416-968-0200.

Schwartz/Reisman Centre

Joseph and Wolf Lebovic JCC, 9600 Bathurst St., 905-303-1821. Contact **Andrea** for info: andrea@srcentre.ca, or ext. 3006.

- **Barry Schwartz** discusses "Invest Well and Retire Better," March 5, 7 p.m.
- Programs for people with Parkinson's: boxing classes, contact yorkregion@rsbaffiliate.com; cycling program, Thursdays at 1:30 p.m., contact stephen@srcentre.ca; mindfulness, contact melissa@theyogapath.ca.
- ShirRonTo, an Israeli choir, is open by audition. Contact shironto10@gmail.com or **Galya Sarner**, 416-638-1881, ext. 4472
- Day trips to the theatre: April 22 *Chicago* at Stratford Festival; May 7, *Gypsy* at Shaw Festival
- Recreational programs for children, teens and young adults with autism spectrum disorder, contact karina@srcentre.ca, or ext. 3042

Jewish Family & Child

Groups are open to all members of the community. A sliding scale is offered for those who need fee reductions Registration required. Call **Shawna Sidney**, 416-638-7800 ext. 6215, or jfandcs.com/groups

- Effective Parenting: A four-session group for parents of children aged two to 10 years. Topics include: how to nurture self-esteem, encourage problem solving, increase communication and set appropriate limits. Starts Feb. 12, 7-9 p.m., 4600 Bathurst St.
- The Jewish Rainbow Alliance: A monthly peer support group for parents, family members and allies of LGBTQ individuals. Feb. 12, 7-9 p.m., 4600 Bathurst St. Pre-registration required.
- Living With Teens: A six-session group for parents of teens. Topics include, setting appropriate limits, learning to let go, parents' rights and responsibilities, the pressures of drugs, alcohol, dating and sexuality. Starts Feb. 24, 7:30-9 p.m., 9600 Bathurst St
- Parenting the Child/Teen With ADHD A four-week group for parents with children/teens diagnosed with ADHD Starts Feb. 25, 7-9 p.m., 9600 Bathurst St
- The Challenge of Anger for Women: A six-session group for women wanting to learn how to express their anger in an assertive, non-aggressive way. Starts Feb 25, 7:30-9 p.m., 4600 Bathurst St. ■

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AUTHORS & POETS

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We invite readers to submit unpublished, original short stories or poetry that explore Jewish themes.

They should not exceed 2,000 words. Selected submissions will appear in the Passover Supplement of The CJN on April 2, 2020. Not all submissions can be published, and not all those selected will appear in both Toronto and Montreal editions. We look for originality. Please don't send more than three entries.

We cannot correspond with contributors.

Deadline for submissions is Feb. 28, 2020 at noon

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Julie Payette: The importance of Holocaust education

JENNIFER TZIVIA MACLEOD
SPECIAL TO THE CJN, JERUSALEM

Canada's governor general, Julie Payette, engineer, scientist, and former chief astronaut of the Canadian Space Agency sat down with *The CJN* during her visit to Jerusalem for the Fifth Annual World Holocaust Forum at Yad Vashem at the end of January. Following her visit to Israel, she traveled to Auschwitz for the 75th anniversary of its liberation.

Gov. Gen Julie Payette taking part in the Fifth World Holocaust Forum in Jerusalem.
SGT. JOHANIE MANEU, RIDEAU HALL PHOTO

Why is it important for world leaders to visit places like Yad Vashem and Auschwitz?

It is very important to keep both a physical, and what I would call an emotional, memory of horrible tragedies that have happened. Part of my role is to be there for those commemorations. In terms of the Holocaust, it is absolutely essential that we continue to perpetuate the *souvenir* [memory] of what happened there. That we continue to do research and that we are putting memorials everywhere so that we teach the next generation. We're at a special point now where the survivors are in dwindling numbers. Eventually there will be no more eyewitnesses of this horrible tragedy. That's why it's important – for education purposes and for the absolute importance that this will never happen again.

A recent poll showed that over 50 per cent of millennial Canadians can't name a single concentration camp. How can we improve Holocaust education in Canada?

By teaching it in history courses. I am a strong supporter of teaching history at all levels in Canada because it's normal, memory fades. And when time passes, it is also normal that some events are simplified. And we can't simplify something like that, because it brought out probably the worst sides of humanity. And we don't want this to be replicated, ever. Unfortunately, human beings are human beings. Atrocities are committed at times and we need to stand up. We need to all be concerned about these things, and all say no. But we need to know about it.

How would you say the lessons of the Holocaust are influencing Canadian policy today?

We are actually very engaged in policies that will diminish racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism. Last year we adopted an anti-racism strategy with a specific definition of anti-Semitism, because it's hard to counteract something without understanding what it is and being in agreement about what it is. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism [which Canada officially adopted last summer] - really gets to the point, and everybody understands what this is about and why we need to stand up.

What most Canadians know about Jews is the Holocaust, period. How can we do better at teaching Judaism as a living culture to promote understanding?

I can't talk about all of the ways that things are taught, but I can talk about that in particular because I have a 16-year-old son and he's just finishing high school this year. So there is this course, because school now is non-denominational in Quebec, where they talk about all the great religions and spiritual movements. And I remember two years ago actually sitting at the dinner table and discussing that with him. Clearly, if he brought it up at the dinner table, it's because it was taught in a manner where he had to ask himself questions.

I remember, particularly, where he looked at me and he said, "Well, they pretty much have similar values," and I said, "Yes, yes, they pretty much do." In Canada, I think we exemplify that because we're an open society, as inclusive as possible. There's always room for improvement, like my mom would say. But as he said, "The values of, 'Hey, I don't want to harm someone, I want to help, I want to live in peace.'" That was pretty cool from a 14-year-old at the time.

What did you discuss during your meeting with President Reuven Rivlin in Jerusalem?

Well, this is not my first time meeting the president. He came on a visit to Canada in April [2019] but he had to leave early [due to the health of his wife who passed away shortly after]. I must say, that was really poignant. Everybody offered condolences, because he is working really hard. And he is still grieving. So I thought he was extraordinary. And we talked about that really, really strong relation between Canada and Israel. That extends not only to trade and culture, but also just in deep-rooted values.

Your predecessor, governor general David Johnston aimed to make the role a more dynamic position. Are you also committed to traveling a lot?

I travel a lot for Canada outside of Canada, but I also travel a lot inside Canada. Because I'm an astronaut, I use a *Star Trek* line - "We boldly go where no governor general has had a chance to go before." So we actually visit places that are not necessarily remote, but places where the governor general hasn't been. We've just completed a fantastic trip in northern Manitoba. You know, Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver have other towns nearby and often these towns are not visited, so we go to these places.

And you've also started conducting virtual visits to schools?

We call it "GG Interactive." The school is on one side and I'm in Ottawa in front of a computer and I answer their questions. And all questions are allowed.

This has been a whirlwind trip. Were you able to travel around at all?

This morning we squeezed in the Old City of Jerusalem and Western Wall and it was fascinating. ■

This interview has been edited and condensed for style and clarity

Sonny Goldstein, CFP
President

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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
FEBRUARY 13, 2020

A love letter to the Calgary Jewish community

RICHARD BRONSTEIN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

As I recall, the weather in June 1990 was mostly good. My wife Judy and I were enjoying our new house and yard in Calgary, having just moved here after four years living in Jerusalem, with two young children in tow.

When we were thinking of moving back to Canada (a good decision although I didn't like it at the time) we considered moving back to our former home in Toronto, where we had both worked for the CBC. We also considered Vancouver because, well, who doesn't. But we chose Calgary because we both had parents there and it would be fairly easy to fit into the Calgary Jewish community. And we were right about that.

Sometime that month we met Ira Brier and Janice Levine. When they found out we were journalists they told us that the owner of the Calgary Jewish newspaper, Doug Wertheimer, had left the city. There would no longer be a paper serving the community.

Ira was interested in filling that void but he was not a journalist. Between us, it looked like we could start something new. Ira and I were enthusiastic, while Judy and Janis were a bit more cautious. As we talked it out, though, it seemed like we could make a go of it. I was working then as director of radio at CBC Calgary, and I was only able to help on off hours. By far, the bulk of the work in setting up the *Jewish Free Press* and turning it into a well-oiled machine was done by Judy.

Our first edition was dated Nov. 15, 1990.

The premise of the paper was to be professional. Opinions were on the editorial page. Everything else was objective news. That means everyone gets a fair shake.

We did not support one branch of Judaism over another. We did not support one cause over another. We felt it was our mission to support all of our community – the young and the old, the rich and the poor, the weak and the powerful. Journalistic objectivity does not mean everything you print is the absolute truth; it simply means that everything you print comes from somewhere and can be verified, it's not made up.

And lucky us, we got to become Jewish newspaper moguls at a time when the community was expanding and fairly humming with events and activity. At the time there were probably a dozen other Jewish newspapers in Canada. The editors used to be invited to conferences in Europe and Israel back in those days. Very heady times, unlike today when there are maybe six Jewish periodical titles in Canada.

We have been doing the *Jewish Free Press* for nearly 30 years. Who would have thought? We've thoroughly enjoyed serving the Jewish community – but now it's time to retire.

Looking back, it's not the paper I remember so much as the community. We have always felt at home here. Our children benefited from growing up here. And as long as we are both able, we hope to be useful contributors to the Jewish community of Calgary for many years.

We both want to thank the many people, organizations and businesses who supported us over the years. A lot of you don't necessarily have to advertise, but you realize it's important to have a community newspaper. Thank you

We are glad to say that there will continue to be a Jewish newspaper in Calgary. We have sold the assets of our business to Deb Shatz and Dan Moser, the mother and son team who publish the *Edmonton Jewish News*.

I've gotten to know them both over the last few months and even got the good word from my daughter Talia who went to camp with Dan. I know them to be honest and hard working. They share our passion for creating a publication that supports Jewish community building.

It's not going to be easy for them to bring the two newspapers together while still maintaining the strong identity of each city, so give them some room and please show support.

Thank you for a wonderful 30 years. Lehitraot. ■

This essay was adapted from the original, which appeared in December in Calgary's Jewish Free Press.

Healthy Aging

The real health threat is heart disease

Dr. Vivien Brown

February is typically the month we highlight heart disease, paying attention to all the issues involved with this killer of Canadians. And interestingly, we choose to devote the entire month, not just a day here and there, to focus on important messages, advocacy around care and education for the public.

While we may be afraid of breast cancer, passionate about brain health and motivated around osteoporosis, it is heart and stroke that will kill one out of three Canadians each year. That statistic demands our attention, our vigilance and our understanding in order to change that paradigm. We, as a population, are frightened of unknown viral diseases, and rightly so. But let's not be complacent about our number one enemy, just because it is familiar. We must do better.

So what are the risks and how do we change them?

There are a number of risks we cannot alter. We cannot alter our family history, our genetic risk. We are born of one sex and risks are different for females and males. We cannot change aging as we all inevitably age.

But what can we change? The number one, most important, undeniable truth is that smoking kills. Even one to two cigarettes a day doubles your risk of a heart attack. There is no safe lower limit, no "small amount that won't kill me," no "just this once." If you do nothing further, quitting smoking is the most important heart healthy behaviour I can recommend.

Let's look at the other risk factors that are modifiable.

Hypertension or high blood pressure (BP) has been known as the silent killer as often patients have no symptoms, unless suddenly it's very high or very low. Most doctors take blood pressure measurements on every visit for patients over 50. But don't wait for your doctor. You can take your BP at most pharmacies or you can purchase a home cuff and an automated machine so that there are no surprises. While the number may vary, generally the goal is 140/90 or lower. It is different for different ages and situations but control of BP is essential. If you have high BP and are on medication, please follow instructions! The most perfect drug, well tested and well established will only work if you take it.

Hyperlipidemia or high cholesterol means too much fat in your blood. Partly that is from diet, eating foods that are fatty or from animal sources, about 30 per cent. There is also a genetic component where your liver produces too much cholesterol and even avoiding all animal fats will not have an impact. Yes, there are good components and bad components to cholesterol, the HDL, or high density lipoproteins and the LDL or low density lipoproteins. Bottom line, after much research, you need a low LDL to be healthy. Those with underlying risk, such as a previous heart attack or diabetes, need that LDL to be excessively low so there is less risk of another heart attack. So either through diet, exercise, weight loss or with the support of appropriate drugs, lowering cholesterol lowers risk.

Diet, weight and exercise are a trio of behaviours that seem to me to fit together. Those of us that are at an ideal weight, exercising regularly and eating a heart healthy diet in general are less likely to have a heart attack or stroke. And I absolutely believe that none of us are perfect! We all want to indulge occasionally and that is fine. What is not fine is when that indulgence becomes a regular habit.

We tend to have sedentary lifestyles in North America compared to other parts of the world. We drive rather than walk, we sit at a desk all day and then rush home, perhaps grabbing fast food on the way. Our overall life has become very hectic. But as I have said to patients and in my book, unfortunately, hectic does not equal aerobic. So let's make some good choices, becoming more active on a daily basis, not just an occasional class at the gym. Let's meet a friend for an exercise class or dance class or yoga or a hike, not for lunch, which typically starts with bread and butter!

February is heart month and we need to pay attention, as if our life depends on it. And it does.

For more information, this issue is discussed in my book *A Woman's Guide to Healthy Aging*. There is also an excellent guide by Dr. Beth Abramson, a well-respected cardiologist at Toronto's St Michael's Hospital called *Heart Health for Canadians*. So no excuses, no accepting the phrase, "I just didn't know." ■

OBITUARIES AND RELATED NOTICES

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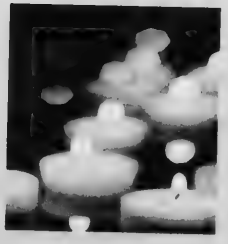

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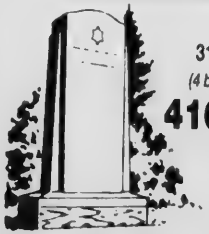

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A starting point for tackling online hate

Wide coalition of community groups comes together to call government to action. PAGE 12

Kippah politics

R2R: Does wearing your heart on your head distract others? The rabbis discuss. PAGE 4

Textual liberation

A new book details the race to save priceless artifacts from the hands of the Nazis. PAGE 23

How to manage the big switch

Day schools are accommodating students transitioning out of public school. SPECIAL SECTION

GIRL POWER

Sarah Schenirer's revolution in Jewish education. PAGE 5

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Quotable

> [redacted]

— Taika Waititi on what he says was a common initial Jewish media response to his Oscar-winning adapted screenplay for Jojo Rabbit.

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Trending

Will those strides stay unbroken?

TikTok, the China-based app whose most popular 15-second videos consist of users dancing to pop songs, has revived "Break My Stride," a top-five 1984 U.S. hit for Matthew Wilder. The track is a favourite of TikTokkers who animate its lyrics about "the strangest dream, about sailing away to China, in a little row boat to find ya." The musician born Matthew Weiner gave up on singing soon after, to work behind the scenes for acts like No Doubt, partly due to recognizing that the song scaled so high up the charts due to a radio payola scheme. But it's been interpolated by rappers a couple of times: Puff Daddy's "Can't Nobody Hold Me Down" in 1997, and Matisyahu's 2009 ditty, "Jerusalem."

Sweet and sour goodbye to Sea-Hi

Sea-Hi Famous Chinese Chop Suey Restaurant, located at 3645 Bathurst St. in Toronto since 1965, will close for good on Feb. 29. It first opened as a northern outpost of a Sea-Hi in the city's Chinatown, at 182 Dundas St. W. And it survived long enough to be immortalized in a 2017 CBC musical documentary, *Dreaming of a Jewish Christmas*. The red neon sign, vintage interior design, and exterior beacon with the take-out number "RU9-1258," made it a living museum for a cross-cultural attraction to Chinese food. Its endurance in the Jewish-dominated neighbourhood led owner Stanley Chui to offer the business for $100,000 in 2018, to no avail.

Matthew Wilder's Break My Stride single

Jughead Jones was sort of Jewish

Victor Gorelick, editor-in-chief of Archie Comics, died on Feb. 8 at age 78. He joined the publisher in 1958, as a high school senior, and was credited with the idea of getting the teens from Riverdale into advertising campaigns for other products. While there was once a Christian version of *Archie*, and the characters seem to be, its three founders were Jewish, including longtime company head John Goldwater. Gorelick rose through the art department before landing at the top, 50 years in. His last words, according to a death notice from Zion Memorial Chapel in Mamaroneck, N.Y., was that he hoped his 62 years of work put a smile on people's faces. ■

Compiled by Marc Weisblott of CJN Today, our email newsletter. CJNews.com/today

Gematria

6

The number of new charges faced by actor Jussie Smollett (whose Jewish grandfather Peter Smollett died in Toronto three years ago) for faking an alleged fake attack in Chicago in January 2019.

31

The number of cities that vocal BDS supporter Roger Waters will visit on his summer tour, five of which are in Canada. Advertising for the shows has been blocked by Major League Baseball, due to his anti-Israel statements.

48

The number of hours it took for *Harry Potter un der filosofisher shteyn*, the first translation of a J.K. Rowling fantasy novel into Yiddish, to sell out its first 1,000 copies, which bodes well for the next six.

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Letters to the Editor

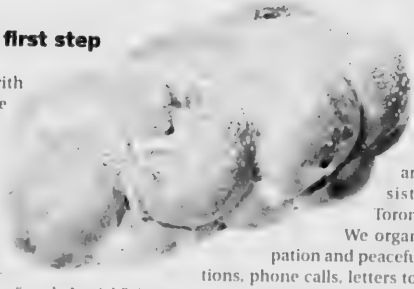
Imagining a double standard

While David Weinfeld's article about imagining the Middle East at its most utopian is a lovely fairy tale ("Imagining peace in the Middle East," Feb. 6), I was most struck by his opening paragraph, where he lambastes U.S. President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as corrupt and bigoted politicians (no argument here), yet lets off Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, the man who published a book claiming the murder of six million Jews during the Holocaust as being a "fantastic lie," as "too old and unpopular" to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Israel being held to a different standard than its Arab neighbours is nothing new in the UN and EU, but is now increasingly seeping into the way American Jews judge their brothers and sisters in the Holy Land. Far from a fairy tale, this is the beginning of a horror story for the Jewish people.

Adam Green
Toronto

Cooking is a first step



I beg to differ with Rabbi Asher Vale ("Judaism is much more than food," Jan. 30) when he writes that a Jewish woman teaching her non-Jewish future daughter-in-law how to "cook Jewish" is an unfortunate initiation into our religion. After all, they say the way to a man's heart is through his stomach.

The young woman is showing an interest in learning about Judaism. Don't knock it. Perhaps this is just the first rung on her ladder of commitment.

Judith Weinroth
Toronto

Jewish solidarity

I say "Amen" to Wendy Eisen's column ("They hate Jews because we refuse to disappear," Feb. 6).

I was the chairperson for Women for Soviet Jewry for three years. During that time, we had representation from most Jewish women's organizations and synagogue sisterhoods in Toronto.

We organized participation and peaceful demonstrations, phone calls, letters to government and manufactured items for distribution to alert everyone we could to the plight of those Jews who were desperate to emigrate from the Soviet Union.

I remember the absolute amazement I felt at the World Conference on Soviet Jewry in Brussels when I became aware of the many Jewish representatives from countries that were unfamiliar to me, such as Zaire. It was a most unusual experience to have their countless languages translated so that all speakers were easily understood.

We Jews, it seems, are thinly spread throughout the world, but ultimately we are (or should be) supportive of each other. That is our strength.

Phyllis Sugar
Toronto

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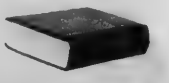
When someone in your family passes away, you want everything to be done right, according to Jewish tradition. When my mother died, I didn't know half of what these things were. Benjamin's spent time with our family, explaining the significance of every sacred ritual. More than that, they made it ours. It was a beautiful way to honour my dear mother's life.

"They thought of everything."



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Rabbi2Rabbi

Wearing your heart on your head

Kippot can be used to broadcast political allegiances, and while this may seem distasteful to some, perhaps those feelings are more of a reflection about the person looking at the head covering than the one donning it.

RABBI MICHAEL DOLGIN
TEMPLE SINAI CONGREGATION, TORONTO

RABBI ADAM CUTLER
ADATH ISRAEL CONGREGATION, TORONTO

Rabbi Cutler: The Talmud teaches, "Cover your head in order that the fear of heaven may be upon you." From this statement emerges the longstanding (historically male) Jewish practice of donning a kippah. It is meant to be a reminder of the Divine presence.

The kippah can also be a signifier of another type: one's domestic political leanings. While I can't attest to seeing Conservative, Liberal or NDP emblazoned kippot, certainly both Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump have been promoted on Jewish head coverings. I think it appropriate that Jews vociferously engage in politics, yet highly inappropriate for Jews to promote their preferred political candidate on their religious garb.

The kippah is about the person and God. That relationship is distorted by a political third wheel. Worse, it indicates that the wearer is subservient not to one, but to two authorities. In a place of prayer, it also distracts other worshippers, thereby detracting from their prayer experience and the unity of the congregation. We may (and should) have our political differences, but in the pews, we should be one people.

Rabbi Dolgin: I think we need to be careful about overreacting to the kind of kippah a certain person might choose to wear. Those who are distracted by a design on a kippah need to work harder at being tolerant and concentrating on prayer, not other prayer participants.

I have personally experienced the kippah as a focus for internal Jewish intolerance. I wear a *kippah serugah* (knitted kippah) at all appropriate times. However, in conversation with a seven-year-old ultra-Orthodox boy, he referred to it as a *kippah chilonit* (secular kippah). Similarly, last March, I was in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem with 28 teenagers and our Cantor Katie Oringel. She was wearing a kippah, and because of that, we were set upon by a large group of haredi school students. We barely got out of the area without a violent incident (though the spitting and cursing remain in our memories).

I finally chose to wear a kippah full-time 17 years ago. I was in Israel during the Second Intifada and found myself too close to three different terror attacks. In addition to reflecting my commitment to Jewish observance, my kippah is a reminder of the importance of showing our Jewish selves publicly and not being cowed by those who seek our harm.

Rabbi Cutler: While it is easier said than done, shuls can be political, but not partisan. That is to say, they can and should be inspired by Jewish values to help frame the independent political decision-making of congregants. Such values – which will differ based on one's own Judaic positioning – will ultimately translate into favouring one candidate over another. The focus, though, should always be on the values, not the person. The only being that we should recognize above our heads is God.

It is in the worship of that one God that we are united. Indeed, more things unite us than divide us. It saddens me to hear of cities in America where synagogues are becoming split along partisan lines, where you have to choose between attending the Democrat shul or the Republican shul.

Synagogues should indeed be relevant and engage with the outside world. At the same time, they should be spaces where our Jewish identity always prevails over our partisan identity.

Rabbi Dolgin: Partisan zealotry is truly one of the curses of this time in history. Jewish and human values receive less attention than political loyalty or correctness. In this environment, it is difficult to deal with political sentiment in a synagogue community.

I believe that the rabbi can play an important role in modelling thoughtful, opinionated and respectful behaviour. I am very careful to base my public messages on issues and values rather than parties and platforms.

Showing honour to God can be best accomplished by showing honour to others created in the Divine image. By setting a public example of openness and sharing private words of concern when others pass political judgments, I think we can make a significant impact, even in these divisive times. ■

Sarah Schenirer's revolution

A new book paints a portrait of the woman who had an unparalleled impact on the education of Orthodox Jewish girls

NAOMI SEIDMAN

It seems important to acknowledge at the outset the unusual circumstances of my involvement with my subject matter: I attended Bais Yaakov of Boro Park for elementary school; a Bais Yaakov high school in Brooklyn and then one in Queens; Michlalah Jerusalem College for Women (a slightly more 'modern' seminary or institute of higher learning for young women); and, finally, another Bais Yaakov seminary in Brooklyn. All of these schools, arguably including Michlalah, are more or less direct descendants of the school system that Sarah Schenirer founded in interwar Poland. The one in Boro Park, along with its high school counterpart two blocks away, were actually among the first Bais Yaakov schools to be established in the United States.

Nevertheless, this story is no natural outgrowth of my personal history; shortly after my last stint in the seminary in Brooklyn, I left the Orthodox world, and at least in my academic research – have rarely looked back. Rather, it is the product of an unplanned encounter that took place, entirely appropriately, in Kraków, the city in which Sarah Schenirer resided for nearly her entire life.

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In the summer of 2010, I brought a group of students from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, where I was teaching, on a study trip to Poland. We launched our trip with a week at the Jewish Culture Festival in Krakow. As anyone who has attended the festival knows, it is among the most interesting and vibrant Jewish cultural phenomena in the world today, and there was more than enough going on to occupy my time and thoughts.

But what stayed with me from that week was the memory of a group of four or five young women I ran into in the courtyard of the famous Remuh Synagogue in the Kazimierz quarter of Krakow. It was clear to me the instant I set eyes on them that they were Bais Yaakov girls: the cut of their long skirts, their hairstyles and blouses, their gait and postures, their voices, even their faces. In that same moment of recognition, it also occurred to me that they must have been travelling back to New York or another Orthodox centre in North America after having spent a post-high-school year at a seminary in Israel, in exactly the way I had travelled with two schoolmates after my year at Michlalah.

And yet there was also something different about them. My friends and I stayed with Orthodox family connections everywhere we went in Europe; later, I joked that I hadn't so much been to Europe as to Boro Park in Zurich, Boro Park in Paris, and then Boro Park in London. These girls were on a rather different itinerary. I was acutely aware, as I always am when I see Orthodox Jews in airports or other public spaces, that I registered to them as a stranger, and outsider to their world.

There was a kind of invisible protective shield around this group that repelled easy conversation. Nevertheless, I summoned my nerve and asked them if they were in town for the festival. One of the girls answered that they were actually there to visit the grave of a woman named Sarah Schenirer. "Oh, right! The founder of Bais Yaakov," I said, to their evident surprise.

Thinking about the encounter later in my hotel room, it occurred to me that these girls were not American Jewish tourists in Krakow, but rather, that they were on a pilgrimage. They were on a younger and female variation of a phenomenon that has grown in the last decade or two, the hasidic pilgrimages to the gravesites or ruined synagogues of past hasidic leaders. These pilgrimages, as well as the journeys of descendants of Polish Jews to the places in which their ancestors lived, are by now well-known phenomena.

But if the young women I had met were part of a larger pattern of visits to Schenirer's grave (as I soon found out they were), they were taking part in yet another kind of trip to Poland, one probably invisible to people who lacked my ingrained ability to spot a Bais Yaakov girl a mile off. These were Orthodox young women travelling to pay homage to a woman related to them not through blood or hasidic affiliation, but rather through the symbolic connections forged within an educational movement for girls. Among the other cultural practices of Bais Yaakov, the behavioural markers that made its students so recognizable, a new practice seemed to have arisen since the time I had belonged to this group. It was a variation on the European journeys young women of my own generation had taken to Orthodox Jewish communities in Paris, London, or Zurich, and an echo of or even return to the very origins of the movement.

Something else occurred to me. I had been in Krakow for three or four days without remembering that Bais Yaakov was founded in the city, or learning that Schenirer was buried here, or that (as I later found out) the building that housed the Bais Yaakov teachers' seminary – the crown jewel of the system – was still standing. But perhaps this wasn't so surprising. While of course the name Sarah Schenirer was engraved in my memory, as it is for every Bais Yaakov girl past or present, the Krakow connection had not stuck, because I had the vague impression that Schenirer had lived in a small town, not in the large city that Krakow clearly was and had long been.

This impression no doubt came from the Bais Yaakov anthem that narrated her story, and whose mournful tune I loved as a child. As the first lines of the song already signal, the story of Sarah Schenirer as it is told and retold to generations of Bais Yaakov students constitutes a powerful myth of origin.

A Purim play, "Cantonists" (or Jewish recruits to the Czar's army), performed by the Bais Yaakov pupils in 1935 in the town of Różan.
FROM THE PHOTO ARCHIVE OF DEVORAH (EPELGRAD) COHN. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED COURTESY NAFTALI COHN.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

The Palestinian blacklist petard

As the fallout from the "deal of the century" continued last week, the Palestinian Authority circulated a draft resolution to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) condemning the Trump plan for peace in the Middle East. But according to multiple sources, it was quietly withdrawn after it became apparent that international backing was not entirely forthcoming. Tunisia, one of the resolution's sponsors, had to recall its UN ambassador over his bungling of the file. (Here's a question without an answer: how would Canada, which is seeking a seat on the Security Council, have voted?)

If it weren't odd enough to see a pro-Palestinian resolution not get passed at the UNSC, the day after the news leaked, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas met in New York City with, of all people, former Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert. "I'm fully ready to resume negotiations where we left it with you, Mr. Olmert," Abbas said, seemingly for getting he turned Olmert down in 2008. If it somehow wasn't already apparent to the pair, that ship has long sailed.

But all was not for naught for the Palestinians at the UN last week, after the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights presented a blacklist of companies operating in "occupied Palestinian territory." The list of 112 businesses – 94 of them Israeli, along with major multinationals like General Mills, AirBnB, Expedia and Motorola – came along with the lamest of caveats: "While the settlements as such are regarded as illegal under international law, this report does not provide a legal characterization of the activities in question, or of business enterprises' involvement in them." Right, it just singles them out for no reason whatsoever. At least Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh came right out and said it: "We will pursue companies listed in the report legally through international legal institutions and in courts … for taking part in human rights violations in Palestine."

Would it surprise you that the very next day it was reported that the blacklist had been produced with assistance

> [redacted]

from groups tied to terror organizations? According to Israel's Ministry of Strategic Affairs, among the organizations that contributed to compiling the list is one whose accountant is not only a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP – but is himself accused of detonating a bomb that killed a 17-year old in the West Bank just last year. Another NGO involved is reportedly headed by a former senior PFLP member. Yes, these are the people blacklisting Israel. Irony doesn't even begin to describe it.

For Israeli companies and global corporations, though, it may be serious business. And the repercussions could very well be felt by those the blacklist purports to defend – after all, we've been through this before. In 2014, following a massive public BDS campaign against it, and with its stock falling, Israeli company SodaStream shuttered its West Bank factory. "It showed that we, as activists as consumers, do have the power to urge other consumers … to really pressure companies to not be complicit in Israel's denial of Palestinian rights," said the head of one pro-Palestinian group in the United States.

Lost in all the talk of denied rights, however, was the fact that the West Bank plant employed somewhere in the area of 600 Palestinians. Most of those could not come to work for SodaStream at its new home in the Negev. "All the people who wanted to close (the factory) are mistaken," one Palestinian employee said at the time. "They didn't take into consideration the families."

SodaStream's stock has since skyrocketed. In the end, the only people who were affected by that example of blacklisting were Palestinian. ■ — YONI

From the Archives

Bat mitzvah ceremony

ONTARIO JEWISH ARCHIVES, BLANKENSTEIN FAMILY HERITAGE CENTRE, UJA FEDERATION OF GREATER TORONTO

The first American bat mitzvah was officiated in New York during a Shabbat Reconstructionist service in 1922. The earliest bat mitzvah photo the OJA has in its holdings is of Rabbi David Monson, founding rabbi of Beth Sholom, in Toronto, officiating his first bat mitzvah in 1953. Do you know when the first bat mitzvah was officiated in Ontario? Contact us ojainquiries@ujafed.org.

SeeJN

Champions again

FLASH90 PHOTO

Hapoel Jerusalem supporters celebrate after their team defeated Ironi Nahariya in the State Cup final in Tel Aviv on Feb. 14, 92-89. The Reds have captured the title for the sixth time.

Essay

Fractures and falls: the F-word of the boomer generation

Dorothy Lipovenko

"So, what happened to you?"

In a hospital's orthopedic clinic, limbs may be immobilized but not the curiosity of the walking injured.

Strangers strike up conversations over the misstep that landed us here, faces registering disbelief that a stair or sidewalk could literally take us down. Individual stories differ, but in the telling we relive the moment of impact.

How often has that scene played in my mind's eye, only I'm re-imagining the past to avoid the throw rug that tripped me, ending in a body slam to the floor and a broken kneecap.

As the pragmatic ER doc put it when the X-ray's verdict was in: from several possible outcomes, this was the best. Throw in mazel at avoiding surgery, and my gratitude to medical staff and the Almighty danced me out the door on one foot.

But weeks later, the blame game kept messing with my head: why didn't I grab a banister to break the fall? (Because spills don't happen in slow motion; you're on the ground faster than a Nasdaq flash crash.)

Why wasn't I watching where I was going? (Who watches their feet in their own house?)

And my favourite, the "if only" mantra: had I stayed in the kitchen cooking for Shabbos, and not gone upstairs to glance at news headlines, might I have averted becoming another F-word statistic?

Because that's what I am now, a statistic on falls and fractures, useful to researchers who keep tabs on such demographic trends.

These are the F-words of a boomer generation newly conversant on patellas, femurs and their range of motion, as injuries heal in Zimmer bandages and walking boots suitable for an astronaut.

Speaking of astronauts, the last time I needed help tying my shoes, Sputnik was on the launch pad, Hollywood released *The Ten Commandments* and Eisenhower was still president.

As a memorable cigarette advertiser reminded women it was courting: "You've come a long way, baby."

Indeed. From ballet at six to balance classes at 66. Not what Madison Avenue had in mind.

But for crunchers of health data, the numbers tell a compelling story.

Accidental falls sent more than 356,000 females and just under 307,000 males to hospital emergency rooms in a recent one-year period, according to the Canadian Institute for Health Information. (And that's not the whole picture because provincial data was incomplete).

But most interesting is a gender gap widening with age: of ER visits by 65-84-year-olds who fell unintentionally, 78,764 were women, compared to just 49,632 men. (The sexes switch places in the ER only once for these accidents, in boys 17 and younger).

While there may be more older women, why do falls skew higher for women generally, especially once we're eligible for the seniors' discount at the movies?

Blame gender differences in balance, muscle mass and distraction.

Dr. Vivien Brown, a Toronto physician and *CJN* columnist, notes that women "fall more and fracture more than men, particularly if they're distracted."

For example, she cited a Swedish study of 70-year-olds asked to count backwards from 100 while walking; more female participants took a dive than men. "Women don't do as well with distraction," said Brown, who cautions her female patients of all ages against walking and texting simultaneously.

As one of civilization's last holdouts without a cell phone, I don't worry about that potential to jam my signals. But on the advice of the physiotherapist treating my knee injury, I've signed up for a program appropriately called Stand Up to Falls.

The name appeals to me: the post-war generation spoke truth to power, has stood up to power and some of us still do. So why not use the tactic on something as dangerous as falls?

In my Montreal neighbourhood, the winter session is full and demand strong for the 12-week program, where a kinesiologist will teach not just how to avoid falls but how to fall properly.

Initially, I balked at the weekly commitment of three hours, but is there a more worthwhile investment of my time?

While grateful to the Jewish General Hospital's medical and support staff for their wonderful care, and overwhelmed by the kindness of my husband's hospital colleagues who sent Shabbat dinner (with homemade challah!) in the early innings, another injurious fall is not on my to-do list.

If not for an accident, the falls prevention program would have flown under my radar, or been ignored altogether. Because the vagaries of getting older, at least for some women, are more acceptable when confined to hair colour and dressing age-appropriately.

But as boomers once learned how to stand on our own two feet, it's time to do so again, to keep us dancing and out of the ERs, for the next 50 years. ■

Dorothy Lipovenko is a writer in Montreal.

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'From these stones will I build my schools'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

In a little town in Poland not so many years ago
Sat a seamstress very sad
Sewing clothes for the body
While the soul remained unclad.

Bais Yaakov started there in Poland
In a tiny little store.
But with Sarah as its leader
Its success began to soar

Sarah, mother of Bais Yaakov
Is today with us no more.
But her spirit will continue
to live on forevermore

• • •

What was it that I had instantly seen in the group of young women? What is a Bais Yaakov girl, as a historical phenomenon, as a "new kind of woman?" How were the first Jewish girls who attended the institution Schenirer had founded related to the group of girls I had run into that afternoon? Who was Sarah Schenirer, and how had she helped create this new way of being a Jew, this new type of young woman, who in turn remembered (and misremembered) her?

In reflecting that "the little town" in which this sad seamstress had sat was actually the bustling metropolis of Krakow, the notion took hold that there was more to the story of Schenirer than I had understood. Leaving Bais Yaakov behind, I had somehow managed to forget that the image of a pious, obedient, and sheltered Orthodox Jewish girl was highly stereotypical. Leslie Ginsparg Klein, academic dean of Women's Institute of Torah Seminary Maalot Baltimore, an Orthodox Jewish college for women, has convincingly deconstructed that stereotype, demonstrating the creative energies and youthful enthusiasm that continue to shape the Bais Yaakov experience.

My own parents had diligently arranged for me to attend school in Jerusalem at 16 (after I graduated early from high school), and then provided the addresses of friends and relatives in Europe for the adventure that followed. These travels had in fact begun earlier – in 10th grade I was part of a group of Bais Yaakov girls who travelled from New York to Baltimore as delegates to the annual Bais Yaakov Convention. Among the impressions that remain of that experience was the excitement of recognizing the continental reach of Bais Yaakov: We sang songs about *akhdus* (unity) at the top of our lungs, danced for hours, heard speeches, saw performances, and swapped stories with those fascinating and exotic creatures – "out-of-town" Bais Yaakov girls. Along with the insularity of Bais Yaakov, the stringencies of "Torah-true" Judaism, I was also given ample opportunities to travel, perform, and sing, supported by networks of connections and deep roots in a fervently remembered shared past. All of these elements were part of the culture of Orthodox Jewish girlhood that shaped me, and that I recognized in those young women in Krakow.

This photo, taken in 1939 in the small city of Slonim, is one of the few images we have of the interior of a smaller Bais Yaakov school. FROM THE PHOTO ARCHIVE OF DE[illegible]
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED COURTESY NAFTALI COHN

The young Bais Yaakov women of the interwar years were accorded even more extraordinary freedoms, travelling (as my mother did) to attend seminaries at a younger age than their later North American counterparts, and sent off to found schools on their own, away from their families. This was not an incidental part of the system which, far from imprisoning young girls in a conservative environment, granted them liberties in a community that, before the rise of Bais Yaakov, had been more inclined to restrict young women's movements to protect them from the alien currents of the day.

Some have argued that Bais Yaakov became increasingly conservative in its post-Holocaust rebirth. But the revolutionary character of the movement has always been inseparable from its conservative and traditional elements. Conversely this revolutionary aspect has never been entirely forgotten, even if some of the charismatic boldness that characterized its beginnings has since given way to what sociologist Max Weber calls the "routinization" of charisma, or has faded from memory. The notion of Bais Yaakov as a revolution is remembered less in the mournful anthem about Schenirer the seamstress than in a story that circulated in the Bais Yaakov of my day (and earlier).

When Sarah Schenirer would walk around the towns of Poland in her tireless efforts to found Bais Yaakov schools, Jewish boys would throw stones at her. She would bend down, pick up the stones, and say to her assailants, "From these stones will I build my schools."

At first this story puzzled me. Who were these boys? Why would anyone object to such a saintly mission, such a clearly legitimate and holy project? Only gradually did I come to understand that Bais Yaakov had been controversial among Orthodox Jews at the outset (and of course, was also denigrated by many Zionists and secularists). Even after it had become a fait accompli, discussions about its legitimacy continued, and continue to the present day. The Schenirer that we spoke of as a pious and modest woman was seen by some in the Orthodox community as a dangerous innovator, and had thus faced opposition (stones), which she turned into support (schools). She was a pioneer, a brave and determined woman who stood up to elements within her own community and rescued Orthodoxy by making a place in it for girls and women.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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Bais Yaakov Seminary students on a cart ride to Lake Morskie Oko, Poland, Aug. 23, 1934.

That this story was a little cryptic in its presentation is no surprise: while the Bais Yaakov discourse grants full honours to Schenirer, it strives to do so while also normalizing her mission within the world of Orthodox values. It is by now almost unthinkable that such a valuable institution might have been subject to religious criticism. Bais Yaakov teachers thus aim to tell the story of the origins of the school system without undue reference to Schenirer's opponents within the Orthodox community or to the leaders who failed to see the necessity of her mission before she – a "simple" woman – did. While Bais Yaakov regularly frames Schenirer as a pioneer and innovator, the notion of her as a radical or rebel is more foreign to the culture of the school (though her diary stands as evidence that she saw herself as something of a rebel, at least in her girlhood). For all the obliqueness with which this aspect of her story is told, her spirit and courage come through, and it is this strand of Bais Yaakov discourse, which champions a woman's independence and initiative, that connects the stories about Sarah Schenirer with the Canadian, American, European, and Israeli adolescents who travel, often unchaperoned, to the memorial erected at her presumed gravesite. ■

Adapted from Sarah Schenirer and the Bais Yaakov Movement, *published by The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization. Naomi Seidman is the Chancellor Jackman professor in the arts in the department for the study of religion and the centre for diaspora and transnational studies at the University of Toronto. The photographs illustrating this article are all drawn from the archive of Devorah (Epelgrad) Cohn, and serve as a record of her life as a Bais Yaakov seminary student and then as a teacher in the movement. In the photo on the cover, she is in a white shirt in the first row. On page 5, she is the teacher, in the middle of the back row. Page 8 depicts Devorah's Grade 6 classroom. On page 9, Devorah is fourth from the right. She carried precious photos with her during her escape, January 1940– June 1941, from Slonim through Vilna and Japan on her way to Boston. These images represent a small fraction of an extraordinary collection of photos, many carefully annotated, that came to Naomi Seidman's attention after her book was already in press, through Devorah (Epelgrad) Cohn's grandson Naftali Cohn, Professor of Religions and Cultures at Concordia University in Montreal. No doubt other family archives hold similar treasures that await publication. These and other photos are available through the website www.thebaisyaakovproject.com.*

We need more 'upstanders' in the world

Bernie Farber

> *there were those who were all too happy to help the Nazis with their Jewish problem.*

January is always a bleak month It is, quite often, the most bitter few weeks of winter; the sun falls early and rises late. Depression, very often, takes a strong hold and for our community it is a reminder of death and sorrow.

For Jews the end of January descends like a dark grey cloud. This year, Jan. 27 marked an anniversary like no other: it was the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp where 1.5 million people were killed in its gas chambers, the vast majority of whom were Jews.

The architects of genocide designed this first modern factory whose sole purpose was the obliteration of an entire people. The Nazis, though, focused their animus and evil almost entirely on two people, Jews and Roma. They were to be wiped off the face of the earth. By the time the devil's work was done the Nazis, using mobile killing units (*Einsatzgruppen*), beatings, starvations and, of course, the gas chambers of Auschwitz, Treblinka, Sobibor, Chelmno and Majdanek, massacred six million Jewish men, women and children - two-thirds of European Jewry. In the same bloodlust, it is estimated that upwards of 500,000 Roma men, women and children met the same fate.

Let's make no mistake. The Nazis were responsible for these genocides. The Nazis planned it with remarkable precision and carried it out with horrible, sick efficiency. Yet, it is clear in my view, that none of this could have been accomplished without, at the very least, the willing participation of local populations under Nazi occupation. Whether it be from France to Holland, from Latvia to areas of Poland, Ukraine and Lithuania, there were those who were all too happy to help the Nazis with their Jewish problem.

They were haters who looked at Jews with disgust. Many envied Jewish families, others simply were driven by either nativist anger or classical forms of Christian-stoked biblical Jew hatred. My late father never forgave the Poles. He and his family had lived in the small Polish village of Bothki for generations. My paternal grandfather was the town miller. He, my father and his six brothers worked amongst both Jews and Poles. They knew each other, did business with each other and when the Nazis invaded Poland, these same neighbours, in sadly large numbers, betrayed their fellow Jewish citizens.

They weren't all like this. Many were just bystanders who did nothing to help or anything to hurt. I understand these people, after all, to help a Jew in Nazi occupied Poland, at that time, would bring death to your entire family. Better then to be a bystander than a Nazi enabler.

What was missing from Bothki were too few "upstanders," a person who comes to the aid of a fellow human being who is under attack or harassment. My father's friend Julian was such an "upstander."

A friend since childhood, Julian was a Byelorussian whose family moved to eastern Poland. Following the liquidation of the Bothki Ghetto, where my father became separated from his family, Julian found him hiding in the woods. He took him home. Together they built a small underground cellar where my father hid for months. I recall my father telling me that when he had lost all faith it was Julian who gave him hope, "we are friends, brothers," he told him "as long as I will be alive, you will be alive."

Julian was an "upstander." He understood the risk, but he also knew and understood his moral centre. He chose to honour life and in doing so he helped defeat Hitler's evil.

There were far too few "Julians" then and there are far too few "Julians" today. And today, our choices are not bound up in life and death. They are bound up simply in right and wrong.

At a time when anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, xenophobia and racism are at unprecedented levels, we must all commit to being upstanders. We must all be like Julian. ■

Montreal must adopt the IHRA definition

Gil Troy

On April 5, 2004, Jew-haters firebombed the United Talmud Torah's St. Laurent campus, burning down the school's library. These criminals admitted that they attacked this Jewish school in Montreal to lash out against Israel. After pleading guilty, Sleiman El-Merhebi was sentenced to 40 months in prison; charges were dropped against Simon Zogheib.

While most Canadians denounced this anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist hate crime the editors of *La Presse* felt compelled to "balance" letters to the editor condemning this modern-day book-burning with "different sentiment(s)" – as if hate crimes are up for debate. One letter dismissed the burning of "a little library." The second sneered: "If our friends in the Jewish community were ... not so almost unanimously supportive of the hateful and intransigent policies of Israel, we would obviously be more scandalized by these unfortunate acts."

The moral confusion a few influential Montrealers displayed, and the constant blurring by haters of their Israel-hatred and Jew-hatred, is why it was particularly important for the city of Montreal to accept the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of anti-Semitism.

I complained at the time in the *Montreal Gazette*: "When Jews note the obvious connection these days between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism, they are accused of being thin-skinned, intolerant, even McCarthyite; yet when anti-Semites justify attacks against Jews by pointing to Israeli actions, as the United Talmud Torah vandals did, there are supposedly reputable people around who deem the connection reasonable, contextualized and thus, implicitly justified."

The moral confusion a few influential Montrealers displayed, and the constant blurring by haters of their Israel-hatred and Jew-hatred, is why it was particularly important for the city of Montreal to accept the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism. The mayor's recent refusal is not just a political failure by the Jewish community – it's a moral failure by the mayor and her supporters.

This broadly-accepted definition – in Europe not just North America – defines anti-Semitism as "a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities."

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The most controversial example says that "Manifestations might include the targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity." The UTT attacks – along with literally thousands of other anti-Semitic incidents since 2004 – prove why this addition is necessary. A central source of modern Jew-hatred indeed involves singling out Israel as what Prof. Irwin Cotler calls "the collective Jew."

But critics who claim that this definition squelches debate miss the marvellous next line, specifying that "criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as anti-Semitic." That nuance – along with this unfortunate spike in Jew-hatred – explains why this definition has become so accepted. Unlike most campus speech codes and other attempts to define bigoted speech, this definition actually carves out a healthy platform that encourages criticism. The idea isn't to squelch criticism of Israel; it's to end the demonization of Jews.

Within months of the bombing, generous donors, Jewish and non-Jewish, from across North America and Israel, funded a new, improved library. It was named the Azrieli Library in honour of Stephanie Azrieli, UTT's school librarian from 1975 to 1985 (and a close friend, I'm proud to write). What better symbol of the Jewish approach, the Zionist approach to hatred. We're tree planters not just firefighters. Yes, we will fight for passage again. Yes, Canadian Jews should take political revenge against this mayor and other officials who resist this just move. And yes, we all should remember that living well, thriving, not just surviving, is the best response. ■

Do you disagree with our columnists? Have your say by writing to **cjninfo@gmail.com.**

The importance of Jewish studies

Organizations, such as this Hillel chapter in Waterloo, Ont., as well as Jewish studies programs help students find their place in university life. FILE PHOTO

Sara Horowitz

Around this time of year, intense deliberations occupy university-bound high school students and their parents. When students have options – because of their academic merit, some measure of family affluence and other factors – they want to find the best fit. Which university has the best program in their chosen field? Which will keep them near, or far from, home? Which will challenge their minds? Or let them coast by with minimal effort? Which promises to set them up well for their future careers? Which will nourish their curiosity? Where are their friends going? Where will they forge important new friendships?

Jewish students frequently bring an additional set of concerns. Where can they find kosher food? Where can they meet other committed Reform Jews? Where can they be assured of daily minyanim? Are there egalitarian services for the High Holidays? Where will they easily continue the religious traditions of their family? Where can they experiment with moving away from them?

Not only students, but their parents also do research about Jewish student life at the universities under consideration. Especially if they are considering enrolling at out of town schools, they are often reassured by the presence of student organizations such as Hillel, and by nearby Jewish communities. And sometimes they look to see whether universities offer courses, and even programs, in Jewish studies.

What we have come to think of today as university-based Jewish studies look very different from their university origins. Centuries ago, when universities, and the professors affiliated with them, were Christian, Jewish and Hebrew studies were a means for Christian theologians and scholars to learn about the origins of their own religion, and to affirm its superiority over Judaism.

Then, as educational opportunities opened up for Jews, particularly in western Europe, Jews in universities began studying their own texts and history, applying the modern methodologies and scientific approaches they learned to Jewish culture and the Jewish past. Part of their motivation was to claim a certain dignity for Jewish studies, to engage with the same tools that one applies to any other nation or culture. While many of these modern Jewish researchers came from traditional backgrounds, they wrote and thought from a proudly secular perspective.

The Jewish studies most familiar to us in North American universities took off in the 1960s and 1970s, part of a growing awareness of the paucity of courses and research reflecting the experiences of minorities. In the last quarter of the 20th century, Jewish studies flourished, part of the same wave that inaugurated women's studies programs, black studies programs and so forth.

Unlike its early roots in Christian Europe, most of the pioneering professors and students in these programs considered themselves part of the culture they studied. It was a major shift: not outsiders looking in, assured of their cultural dominance and superiority, but insiders, asserting the worth of their own heritage and lived lives. For students who could finally see their own faces and experiences reflected in what they read and discussed in class, these programs were energizing, exciting and affirming.

This new kind of Jewish studies often served to affirm Jewish identity, often in ways that redefined it. Both religious and secular professors and students were drawn to it. Jewish communities, too, liked seeing themselves reflected in the university curriculum.

They liked that Jewish youths, sent off to study away from home, could connect with their heritage, not only through student groups, but through academic study as well. Over time it became clear that not only Jewish students took Jewish studies courses. And some of the leading researchers and teachers in the field are not Jewish. As university administrators came to value diversity and to promote an appreciation of multicultural approaches, students were encouraged-sometimes required – to take courses that reflected cultural differences in society. And the Jewish community began to see in Jewish studies programs not only a means to maintain Jewish identity, but to counter the misconceptions about Jews and Judaism that feed anti-Semitism.

At its best, contemporary Jewish studies research and courses are a showcase for what universities excel at: looking at something in depth, posing questions, complicating our understanding and expanding knowledge. ■

News

Communities join to address online hate

PAUL LUNGEN
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Last year on April 20, an estimated 500,000 people gathered in Surrey, B.C. to celebrate the Sikh community's annual Vaisakhi festival. Organizers said it was the largest such gathering anywhere in the world and, naturally, it attracted media attention. Responding to a news story about it on Facebook, one person wrote, "Imagine what one pressure cooker bomb could have done.... Missed opportunities suck."

Balpreet Singh Boparai, legal counsel to the World Sikh Organization of Canada, mentions that incident as an example of why civil society and the Government of Canada need to address online hate.

That incident, along with the 2012 shooting in a Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wis., that killed six, highlight the view that hate that incubates online can have real-life consequences, Boparai said.

Something needs to be done to protect minority communities, and with that in mind, he said the World Sikh Organization joined 41 other groups in an initiative led by the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) to urge government action.

On Feb. 4, 42 organizations sent a letter to Justice Minister David Lametti calling on the government "to move forward with its policy on online hate based on the work done by the (House of Commons standing) committee (on justice and human rights).

"While the signatory groups to this letter might have their own specific issues with some recommendations contained in the committee's report, we all agree that it is a good starting point," the letter states. "For vulnerable segments of Canadian society – including women, indigenous peoples, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, black Canadians, and LGBTQ2+ Canadians, among many others – online hate ultimately poses a threat to personal safety. Online hate is a real and present danger and we cannot afford to wait any longer to take action."

On Feb. 11, CIJA and UJA Federation of Greater Toronto hosted a conference on the legal aspects of tackling online hate.

The letter is signed by organizations representing a broad spectrum within the Canadian mosaic. Among them are: Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at (Canada); Anglican Church of Canada; Baha'i Community of Canada; Canadian Rabbinic Caucus; Federation of Asian Canadian Lawyers, Ontario; Capital Pride; Groupe de Parents Immigrants Francophones; Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada; Ukrainian Canadian Congress; and CIJA.

Richard Marceau, vice-president of external affairs and general counsel for CIJA, said the letter to the justice minister follows up on an effort launched by CIJA in December 2018 to mobilize like-minded community groups to press the government "to develop a national strategy to combat online hate."

He credited that initiative with leading to the House committee hearings on the issue, at which CIJA and other organizations made submissions.

"The committee issued a report in June 2019 that included many of the recommendations called for by our coalition," Marceau said.

"We will work with the government to determine the most effective way in which to proceed with implementing the various recommendations. The government might come up with other ideas, which of course we would be open to considering. Likewise with tech companies. We see this as a collaborative effort between government, identifiable groups, the tech industry, law enforcement and the legal profession," Marceau said.

Dahabo Ahmed Omer, a spokesperson for the Federation of Black Canadians, said the organization signed on to the letter to Lametti because "the government needs to ensure that Canadians are safe."

The federation appeared before the parliamentary committee last year, and it is calling on the government to reinstate something like Section 13 of the Canadian Human Rights Act, which addressed online hate.

That section was repealed in 2014 following a free vote because of concerns it unduly restricted free speech.

Ahmed Omer said Criminal Code provisions against hate promotion are inadequate to address online hate, and a legislative mechanism similar to Section 13 is needed to protect potential victims.

The signatories are hoping for hate speech to be regulated, she said. "We're saying there has to be a line people can't cross, where it's harmful to others."

"Freedom of expression is a foundational value for Canada and one that CIJA strongly supports," said Marceau. "That being said, free speech does not include hate speech. There can be reasonable limits that, in the language of the Charter (of Rights and Freedoms), are 'justified in a free and democratic society,' " he said.

"CIJA has long held the view that removing Section 13 leaves a gap in the legal toolbox to fight online hate. There are multiple, legitimate ways to remedy this. One is to enhance training for police and Crown prosecutors to ensure more robust, consistent use of Criminal Code hate speech provisions.

"CIJA believes that, with the right balance, a reasonable consensus can be achieved with respect to Section 13.

"If misused, misconstrued or poorly constructed, any new legal provisions – including a renewed Section 13 – would risk undermining the overarching goal: to protect Canadians and prevent hate propagandists from gaining sympathizers and adherents," Marceau stated. ■

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Grieving family grateful for communal response

ALEX ROSE
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Philip Viater, the stepfather of a four-year old girl who was found dead on the night of Feb. 9, says the support and comfort offered to his family by Jews at home and abroad in the wake of the tragedy represents a sense of community that he's never felt before.

Keira Kagan, a student at Bialik Hebrew Day School's north campus, was found at the bottom of a cliff in Rattlesnake Point conservation area in Milton, Ont., next to her father, Robin Brown. The *Toronto Star* reported that Brown had been locked in a bitter custody battle over Keira with her mother, Jennifer Kagan.

When people in the Jewish community became aware of the news, they immediately began reaching out with condolences and offers to help, Viater said. And the offers came not just from acquaintances but from total strangers as well.

"We've even received messages (from) people who are in Israel who have reached out to me and asked for all of our Hebrew names so they could post prayers in the Kotel and say a prayer for our family and Keira," Viater said.

People closer to home have been offering to provide food and drinks and whatever else the family may need.

Benjamin's Park Memorial Chapel, where Keira's funeral was held on Feb. 13, was also accommodating, said Viater.

"We were in shock when they just told us right off the bat, before we even started, that they've already approved some significant discounts to effectively charge us bare bones for the funeral," he said. "Everyone's just coming together. We didn't expect it, but it's really heartfelt and we appreciate this."

One of the family's friends, Danit Fischtein, started a fundraiser in Keira's memory through the online platform GoFundMe to raise money to donate to a cause in her name. As of Feb. 13, two days after it went online, the page had already raised more than $25,000.

"We want Keira's memory and name to live on, and we don't want her to have died in vain. We want to be able to donate this money to some sort of cause that we know Keira would support," Viater said, adding that the family is considering children's causes and domestic violence charities.

Viater also said the response from Bialik has been "over and above what we would have expected from any school," including condolences and a care package with food.

Keira Kagan FACEBOOK PHOTO

Benjy Cohen, Bialik's head of school, said the school did what it could in such a difficult time, although their actions "pale in comparison to the depth of the tragedy." Cohen also said Bialik has been working on how to take care of the whole school community, including students, staff and parents, such as making grief counselling available for everyone in the school, including Keira's kindergarten classmates.

Cohen said it's important to be honest with children and give them an opportunity to process what happened, in an age-appropriate way. For kindergarten students, that includes accommodating their difficulty in grasping the finality of the situation.

"We assure them that the person isn't hurting, they're not in any pain, but we're not going to be able to see them or talk to them every day, the way we used to. But we can still think about them. It's important for us as adults to share our feelings with the children, to say, you know, we're sad to mourn this. This makes me feel really bad as well," he said.

For Viater, the outpouring of support has made him appreciate the value and strength of the Jewish community anew, though it's hard for him to put that feeling into words.

"I could go to synagogue and I could get greeted by people and I can know that there's a respect and appreciation for one another. But this is different," Viater said after some thought. "This is people coming in and looking at us and contacting us as if we are their family.... I don't know what better way to say it." ■

John Syrtash
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Family Lawyer & Mediator
for 39 years

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Answers to pressing questions on Family Law

Family Matters by John Syrtash

Valentine Day's Alert: Buyer beware when sponsoring someone to Canada as your new bride or husband.

Question: I am a Canadian Citizen. I sponsored my newly wedded husband to come to Canada from India. Within two months, he split, and I'm heartbroken. Do I have to wait one year to get divorced? Am I on the hook for him if he goes on welfare?

Answer: You have to wait one year of separation until a court can grant a divorce judgment. However, you can commence your divorce action at any time within the year. This is important since when the one year is over then by starting the action earlier, you will save about two months waiting time in the process. Secondly, when you sponsored your husband to come to Canada, you signed a contract with the Canadian government and the taxpayers of this country such that if he goes on welfare then you may be "on the hook" to repay what he took from the public purse for three years. So start praying that he doesn't go on public assistance. There are a growing number of cases where both men and women who commit fraud by pretending to marry a Canadian citizen as a ticket to immigrate here without the right qualifications. Then shortly after getting landed immigrant status and arriving in Canada, they leave the marriage. They deceive their partners and Canada Immigration by using the marriage as a vehicle to short circuit the regular immigration application process. The result is heartbreaking for those Canadians who truly thought they'd met their match, sort of like Puccini's *Madam Butterfly* in reverse. Women are often emotionally or even physically abused and then abandoned by such phony immigrants. Men often spend large sums on mail-order brides and then find that the woman had not the slightest intention in continuing with the relationship. This phenomena is not restricted to spouses from brides/husbands who come from India or Russia where mail-order brides are common but also from people seeking fraudulent ways to immigrate from all over the world. By victims reporting such cases, the RCMP and Canadian Immigration have begun to successfully prosecute such individuals. So when sponsoring don't be a victim. Do your research and buyer beware.

Visit www.freemychild.com; www.spousalsupport.com; www.garfinzeidenberg.com.

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Sponsored by the Community for Jewish Culture of B'Nai Brith Canada.

Montreal paper for Russian Jews marks 25 years

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Golos Obschini, a Montreal-based Russian-language newspaper tailored to Jewish immigrants, is celebrating its 25th anniversary, a remarkable achievement for a publication serving a small market.

It's known in English as "The Voice of Community."

"I tried to stop a few times, but the community kept asking me to continue," says publisher and editor Mark Groysberg. "It's the only Russian paper here for a Jewish audience."

Mark Groysberg

Groysberg is able to carry on because this is essentially a one-man operation. From the basement of his home, the 70-year-old edits the monthly paper, sells advertising, deals with the printer, distributes copies and, quite often, tops up the approximately $1,000 overhead for each issue out of his pocket.

The only "staff" is a freelance proofreader. Most of the articles in the 24-page newspaper are contributed for little or no remuneration, or are written by Groysberg, whose "day job" is a real estate agent.

The content typically is Russian culture and history, Israel and current Jewish concerns like anti-Semitism; there's always a page about health, a column teaching English, and obituaries. Local coverage is usually limited to major happenings, such as an election.

Groysberg has always seen the paper as a way of helping immigrants understand their new home.

Until about three years ago, *Golos* was published twice a month. Today, *Golos* has a little over 200 subscribers, only half of whom pay the fee, he said, but 5,000 copies are run off each month, which are dropped off at some 100 locations. Some content is online (www.unitedcommunityvoice.com).

Revenue consists of grants from the Jewish Community Foundation of Montreal (JCF), which has supported the paper to varying degrees from the beginning, advertising and donations. "People occasionally give me maybe $500, $400, $100," he said.

For many years, Groysberg has been a sort of ambassador of the Russian community, sitting on the boards of almost every major community organization. He was born to Holocaust survivors in the small Ukrainian town of Kamenets-Podolsky in 1949. He worked for many years as journalist in Ukraine and Chechnya, then a Soviet republic.

In 1990, just before the fall of the Soviet Union, he and his wife and their two children immigrated to Montreal. Already past 40 and not knowing English or French, Groysberg struggled to get settled here. At one point he was juggling two or three part-time jobs and taking classes.

Like many earlier Russian Jewish immigrants, Groysberg came into the orbit of Chabad Rabbi Israel Sirota, one of the first to arrive in Montreal in the early 1970s. He suggested starting Montreal's first Russian Jewish newspaper to serve in particular immigrants arriving following the chaos with communism's collapse.

Among them was Groysberg's older brother Yuri, a well-known editor, who immigrated in 1993 to Montreal.

Mark Groysberg was already busy enough trying to make a living. It seemed mad to take something so uncertain.

But Rabbi Sirota convinced him it could be done and offered to have Chabad pay for the printing. The Groysberg brothers got down to business.

Through JIAS, Groysberg was directed to the JCF and its then executive director Bobby Kleinman handed him his seed money – $12,000. "He said, 'Do what you can with it.'" The first $500 went toward a computer. Groysberg worked on the paper at night in the small apartment he and his family were living in.

The debut issue rolled off the press at the end of 1994. Although Quebec has only about 60,000 Russian speakers, according to Groysberg's estimate, five Russian newspapers are published here, two of them weeklies. They compete among themselves, but Groysberg said, "They're not worried about me. I'm not much competition." ■

Mizrachi Organization of Canada
and Congregation Bnai Torah
mourn the passing of

PAUL DAVID FORMAN ז"ל

Paul was a kind and gentle soul, incredibly devoted to his family, synagogue and to Klal Yisrael.

Paul served as Director of Operations for Mizrachi as well as President of B'nai Torah for multiple terms.

He was a Past President of Jewish Family and Child Service and involved in numerous charitable and community endeavors here in Toronto as well as in Israel.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to his wife Annie, his brother Mark, his children, Avrom, Adina and Aryeh and to his grandchildren.

Paul will be deeply missed and long remembered for his incredible kindness, dedication and humility.

הַמָּקוֹם יְנַחֵם אֶתְכֶם בְּתוֹךְ שְׁאָר אֲבֵלֵי צִיּוֹן וִירוּשָׁלָיִם

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Paul Forman z"l

PAUL DEVOTED HIMSELF TO HELPING THE JEWISH PEOPLE. HE ALWAYS SUPPORTED BNEI AKIVA OF THE US & CANADA AND WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR SPREADING THE LOVE OF AM, TORAH AND ERETZ ISRAEL TO THOUSANDS.

Wayne Yaffee, *Chairman of the Board*
Rav Shaul Feldman, *Executive Director*
Bini Dachs, *Assistant Director*

Trial places Quebec Hasidic schools under scrutiny

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Hundreds, and possibly thousands, of children continue to attend Hasidic schools in Quebec where the province's compulsory curriculum is not taught, even though the government has been aware of the situation for decades, two former Hasidim who left the Tash community allege in their suit against the government and their former schools.

The landmark civil trial, which opened Feb. 10 in Quebec Superior Court, is hearing a case brought by Yochonon Lowen, 42, and his wife Clara Wasserstein, 41. They allege the education they received at Tash schools in Boisbriand, about 30 kilometres north of Montreal, included extremely little secular studies in violation of the law.

They contend that there has been little improvement at these and other ultra-Orthodox schools since they were children.

Their lawyer Bruce Johnson told the court the government knew of the situation for more than 30 years and even today the "vast majority" of boys coming out of Tash schools are not capable of functioning in the world.

The couple are not seeking damages. They want a declaratory judgment that the schools denied and continue to deny children the right to receive the education to which they are entitled between the ages of six and 16, and that the government and educational authorities, in tolerating that, are also culpable.

Specifically, the defendants are alleged to have violated the Education Act, the Act Respecting Private Education, the Charter of the French Language, and the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.

Named are the attorney general of Quebec, the local school board the Commission scolaire Seigneurie des Mille-Iles, several Tash schools and institutions, and Rabbi Elimelech Lowy, spiritual leader since 2015 of the community of about 3,000. His late father established Tash in Quebec after arriving from Hungary in 1951. He moved the community to Boisbriand in the early 1960s.

In their deposition, Lowen and Wasserstein claim the schools they attended did not have a permit to operate, that the language of instruction was Yiddish, and that the majority of the time was devoted to religious studies.

"The plaintiffs have never received a class in history, geography, science, art or physical education. In the case of [Lowen], he never even had a French class. The plaintiffs completed their secondary education without knowing what the St-Lawrence River is or ever hearing about the theory of evolution," their lawyers state.

They claim both the Education Ministry and local school board, which was responsible for ensuring children in its territory attend schools that meet the requirements of the law, knew what was going on.

Yochonon Lowen

The couple say they want "to prevent future generations of children from suffering from what they suffered" by forcing the government to ensure that the full curriculum is taught in private religious schools.

Under the law, all schools, public or private, must teach a minimum of 25 hours of secular studies a week, including nine hours of either French or English, seven hours of mathematics, two hours of physical education and health, and seven hours divided among the arts, history, geography, citizenship, ethics and religious culture, and science and technology.

The plaintiffs' lawyers also argue that other Hasidic schools in Montreal are not fully teaching the mandatory curriculum.

That was denied by the Tash community's lawyer David Banon and government lawyer Eric Cantin, who said the secular education Hasidic children receive today is much better.

Bill 144, adopted in 2017, introduced stricter surveillance of school attendance and set standards for homeschooling. The Education Ministry had made an arrangement with the Hasidic communities permitting the curriculum to be taught by parents supervised by local school boards, allowing the children to continue to attend religious schools.

Caroline Kelly, who oversees homeschooling at the Education Ministry, testified that about 830 students from Tash are now being homeschooled under the supervision of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board, and the program has been working well.

Abraham Ekstein, president of the Association éducative juive pour l'enseignement à la maison, said there are no more illegal schools.

Last year, the Coalition Avenir Québec government amended the law to ensure that homeschooling is more in line with what is taught in schools and that the children write provincial exams.

The plaintiffs' lawyers cast doubt on how successful homeschooling has been. They say students are still going to the Académie des Jeunes Filles Beth Tziril, one of the defendants named, even though that Tash school's permit expired in 2012 and was supposed to have closed in 2013, according to Education Ministry information cited in the suit. It is claimed the Tash boys' schools do not and never held a permit.

Also named in the suit are the Yeshiva Oir Hachayim in Boisbriand and, in Montreal, the Grand Séminaire Rabbinique Tash de Montréal and the Collège Rabbinique de Montréal Oir Hachayim D'Tash.

"These schools gave and still give to the boys of the Tash community an essentially religious education based on the Torah, the Talmud, and the teaching of the language intimately related to it – Yiddish," it is stated in the deposition.

Lowen had religious instruction from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., six days a week, and received less than six hours a week of "rudimentary" math and English.

Wasserstein, who attended schools now operated by Beth Tziril, received six to 10 hours a week of secular education between the ages of six and 13, including some French. After that, she attended only religious classes in Yiddish.

Neither holds even an elementary school diploma.

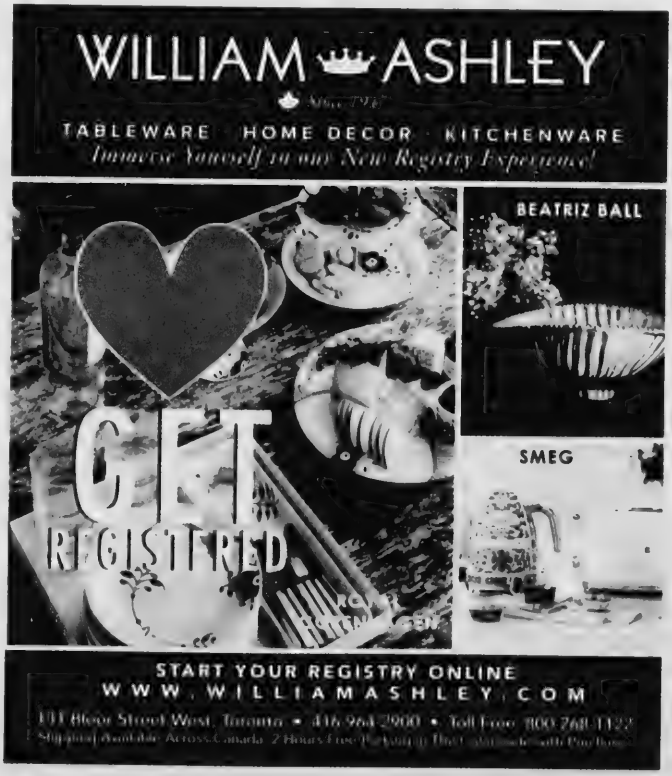
The couple left the Tash community 10 years ago. Now living in Montreal and the parents of four children, they have been on welfare because they have difficulty finding employment, it is stated.

Moreover, they say having grown up completely isolated from Quebec society and the greater world has "compromised their social and emotional development" to this day and hindered their integration.

Born in the United Kingdom, Lowen settled with this family in the Tash community in 1988 at age 10. New York-born Wasserstein arrived as an infant.

Among the first witnesses at the trial were Marie-Josée Bernier, chief of services for the Youth Protection Department of the Laurentians, and Maryse Malenfant, a former Education Ministry official who oversaw private schools.

They recounted attempts in 2014-2015 to rectify the "educational neglect" of boys in particular at the Tash schools, with less than satisfactory results. ■



Excavations unearth stunning mosaics

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The head of a royal figure, thought to be Alexander the Great. JIM HARRISON PHOTO

Prof. Jodi Magness at the archeological site.

The archeological world has been buzzing since last summer with news that a dig in Israel yielded stunning mosaics that were not only preserved beyond expectations, but presented scholars with some significant firsts.

The excavation of a 5th century CE synagogue in Huqoq, an ancient Jewish village in the Lower Galilee near Capernaum and Magdala (modern day Migdal), has revealed a mosaic floor that provides the first depiction of the story of Jonah found in ancient Jewish art, the first portrayal of an episode that is considered so minor it barely merits mention in the Bible, and the first non-biblical story adorning an ancient synagogue.

The find reflects an "unparalleled, rich repertoire of biblical and non-biblical scenes," the project's leader, Prof. Jodi Magness of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, told *The CJN* in a phone interview.

Magness and her team began the excavation in 2011. There were indications that there had been a synagogue in the prosperous Jewish village of Huqoq, but its precise location was unknown.

The team unearthed a large, well-constructed building made of big blocks of stone – in all, about 20 metres long by a little under 15 metres wide.

"Not only does it have these amazing mosaics but also richly decorated walls and columns that were covered in painted plaster," Magness said. "And some of the paint is still adhering to columns. I like to say it was a very kitschy synagogue."

But what really attracted attention were the magnificent mosaics paving the floor.

Typically, Galilean synagogues from this period were paved with flagstones, Magness explained. The few floor mosaics discovered have been very poorly preserved, but those at Huqoq are 70 to 75 per cent preserved.

"There's nothing else like it," Magness enthused.

At least two panels are not biblical. One of them, the so-called elephant mosaic, might suggest the legendary meeting between Alexander the Great and the Jewish high priest in Jerusalem. Others have suggested possible Maccabean or Hasmonean interpretations, Magness said.

The other non-biblical mosaic is a helio, or sun-based, zodiac in the centre of the synagogue. Magness said such symbols have been found in about 10 ancient synagogues in Israel.

The biblically-themed mosaics offer rich references to Samson, the books of Isaiah and Daniel and the story of the spies who bring back clusters of grapes after they scoped out the land for Moses, as described in the book of Numbers. Also found were mosaics depicting the building of the Tower of Babel, Noah's Ark and one showing Pharaoh's soldiers being swallowed by giant fish in the Reed Sea.

Apart from the first known depiction of the story of Jonah in a building this old, what's generated a lot of attention worldwide is a mosaic that was uncovered last summer. It portrays the reference, found on two lines in the book of Exodus, to Elim, a place where the wandering Israelites camped after leaving Egypt because it had springs of water and palm trees.

"It's a pretty obscure episode," Magness said. "That's one of the things my specialists are trying to figure out. What is it about this particular episode that resonated with this congregation?"

The mosaic is clear, though: The word Elim is rendered in Hebrew.

Magness said her team has excavated approximately three-quarters of the Huqoq synagogue, and estimates it needs another two years to complete the dig. Whether the site will ever open to the public is up to Israel, she added.

Magness is slated to speak in Toronto on Feb. 21 at 6 p.m. at the Royal Ontario Museum's Eaton Theatre on the excavations at Huqoq, which are co-sponsored by the University of Toronto with donations from the Canadian Institute for Mediterranean Studies. ■

Demands grow for McMaster University to ban Israel Apartheid Week

STEVE ARNOLD
SPECIAL TO THE CJN, HAMILTON, ONT

Israel detractors at McMaster University are looking for public donations to finance their annual Israel Apartheid Week (IAW).

As the GoFundMe campaign by Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights nears its $600 goal, however, Israel supporters are petitioning McMaster's new president to ban the event.

In a letter, to both McMaster president David Farrar and Hamilton Mayor Fred Eisenberger, Jewish Defence League Canada spokesman Meir Weinstein asked them to intervene to stop the event that he labels "anti-Semitic."

Weinstein said he was especially troubled that promotional material for the March event features a prominent photo of convicted Palestinian terrorist Leila Khaled holding an assault rifle and featuring the slogan "Don't forget the struggle." The image has also appeared in a mural on the Israeli West Bank security wall near Bethlehem.

The IAW event, he added, is just another part of a "history of anti-Semitism at McMaster" by the SPHR group that has included leaders praising Adolf Hitler, demonizing Jews and glorifying terrorist organizations.

In an emailed statement, a spokesman for the campus group Hillel Ontario said the group "strongly objects" to Israel Apartheid Week.

"McMaster Hillel and Hillel Ontario strongly object to the presence of IAW events on campus and the week's ridiculous premise," Ilan Orzy, Hillel Ontario's director of advocacy and issues management wrote. "IAW is an entirely fringe series of poorly attended events that the vast majority of students ignore."

In an email, a spokesman for the pro-Israel group Canary Mission accused the McMaster administration of putting Jewish students at risk by not taking a firm stand against Israel Apartheid Week events.

"We are not shocked at the latest behaviour of SPHR activists, the group's raison d'etre is anti-Semitism and terror support," the group said. "We are, however, disappointed in the McMaster administration for choosing to turn a blind eye to the inherent anti-Semitism of SPHR and their Israel Apartheid Week at the expense of the safety of Jewish students."

Allegations of anti-Semitism at McMaster are not new. In 2017, Canary Mission investigated the school and released a report identifying 39 people and 287 social media posts deemed demonizing of Jews, anti-Semitic, pro-Hitler and calling for violence against Jews.

In an email statement, McMaster spokesman Wade Hemsworth said all events on campus are governed by the university's Student Code of Conduct.

"The group organizing the event in question is a student group registered with the McMaster Students Union," he wrote. "All such groups are governed by McMaster's Student Code of Conduct, which promotes the safety and security of all students and encourages respect for others.

"The university also provides guidance to all event organizers, which clearly outlines the university's commitment to free expression and lays out what behaviour is deemed unacceptable."

Khaled was involved in two airline hijackings in 1969 and 1970. In the second an Israeli steward was shot by her male accomplice who was, in turn, killed by Israeli sky marshals. The steward recovered. Khaled was captured and held in a British prison until released in exchange for passengers taken in another hijacking.

As of Feb. 12, SPHR's crowd funding drive had raised $450 from 11 donors. One donation was for $100 while others were for $50 or less. ■

Debating the legal status of the West Bank

ALEX ROSE
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Tal Becker SHALOM HARTMAN INSTITUTE PHOTO

Tal Becker, legal advisor of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a senior fellow at the Shalom Hartman institute and a member of Israel's peace negotiation team, began his talk at Toronto's Holy Blossom Temple, on Feb. 11, by warning his audience that they'd likely hear some ideas that would challenge their beliefs and then told them that was the very point of his presentation.

"One of the things that very often happens – I do it myself as well – is that we come to a talk to hear the eloquent articulation of the position we already have," he said. "I just wanted to begin by saying that learning doesn't happen in that way. And at the Hartman Institute, one of the things you do for learning is you switch the volume down on the need to hear the affirmation of your position."

When it comes to arguing, Becker says, the consensus seems to be that the winner leaves unchanged, while the one who expands her point of view is considered the loser.

"I think in the Jewish tradition we need to swap that around," he said. "In other words, we'll have a good night tonight if you leave slightly differently from the way you came. Not necessarily having your view rejected or affirmed, but just seeing things from a different perspective."

Becker wanted his audience to be open to hearing other points of views because of the nature of his topic: the status of the settlements, and Judea and Samaria. He didn't represent his own point of view. He didn't represent the Israeli government's point of view, even though that has been his job as a senior negotiator. Rather, he split the different views on the issue into four camps, surveyed the political and legal arguments of each camp and then unearthed their underlying moral imperatives.

Before diving into the different camps, Becker clarified the legal meaning of the word occupation. In popular discourse occupation often has a negative connotation, but in the world of international diplomacy it is a perfectly legitimate state of affairs. Occupation occurs when a state comes into control of territory as a result of war, and is meant to be a temporary situation. Once the two sides agree on peace terms, the land is ideally returned. Until that time, the occupier acts as a "custodian" of the land, Becker said, maintaining the status quo and protecting the welfare of the native population.

The first of the four camps believes that the term occupation should not apply to Israel's presence in Judea and Samaria since it is land Israel is entitled to per the League of Nations 1922 Mandate for Palestine, and it is impossible by definition to occupy land that is rightfully yours. Israel is not a custodian of land that will one day be under another state's sovereignty, but of land that it alone has a valid claim to and can therefore take control of when ever it wishes.

The second camp acknowledges that Israel is occupying the land, but only until the two parties with legitimate claims to the land, the Israelis and Palestinians, can negotiate how to distribute sovereignty. Until that time, Israel is within its rights to move citizens into that territory – that is, create settlements – since the land had no previous sovereign status the way occupied land won in combat usually would. This second camp represents Israel's official position, a position it alone occupied on the world stage until the United States sided with Israel last year.

The rest of the world mostly falls into the third camp, Becker said, which believes that Israel's occupation is legitimate for security reasons, but that Israel does not have any claim to the occupied land because Israel has already realized its purpose as a home for the Jewish people. This camp believes the occupation should end with a negotiated peace plan that takes into account both Israel's need for security and the self-determination of the Palestinian people, but that Israel does not have a right to move its citizens into the territory since it has no claim to keep non-essential land once peace terms are met.

The final camp believes that Israel's occupation is not legitimate, and it should withdraw as soon as possible without conditions – including protecting its security interests. Becker said there are a few different arguments from this camp: The first is that Israel has so thoroughly violated the norms of legitimate occupation through its expansion of settlements that it has undermined the occupation's legitimacy. Another is that the suffering of the Palestinians, as a result of the occupation, is reason enough to exit the territories, as it constitutes a *shanda* (disgrace) against the moral soul of the Jewish people.

Becker ended his talk by reminding the audience about what it means to have a good Jewish argument and how that applies to the search for truth.

"Having a good (argument) means that the view you do not share expresses a kind of essential truth, that it has to be in the conversation. And a deep part of our tradition says that none of us have the capacity to exhaust the truth," he said.

"The way that you hold communities together is by committing to the brokenness of your own position, and constantly asking yourself what is valid in the view that I do not hold. And each of these views, if you work hard, has a truth in it that needs to be heard and be held. And the act of growing and learning and building community, and maybe even achieving peace, is in the dance of holding the essential truth in each of these views somehow together." ■

Mississauga to review future bookings by Palestinian group

RON CSILLAG
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The City of Mississauga says it will take past experiences with a Palestinian group into account when it comes to future bookings because a recent event by the group was counter to municipal policy.

According to B'nai Brith Canada, the Arab Palestine Association of Ontario (APAO) held the event at the Mississauga Valley Community Centre on Feb. 2 to celebrate "the 55th anniversary of the launch of the Palestinian Revolution."

Loyalists of Fatah, the Palestinian political party, mark this event annually in recognition of a 1965 attempt to destroy Israel's National Water Carrier – "the first major terror attack staged by Fatah," B'nai Brith said in a Feb. 7 news release.

The APAO appears to operate as the "de facto" Canadian branch of Fatah, the Jewish advocacy group said.

B'nai Brith said it had warned Mississauga officials that an event "glorifying a terrorist attack" would breach the municipality's Use of City Facilities policy.

Last reviewed in December 2019, the policy bans activities which "have the potential to incite" the use "or intended use" of violence and/or hatred, and requires that "in light of generally acceptable, prevailing community standards, the event is not likely to cause deep or widespread offence."

The city allowed the event to proceed "despite its troubling nature," and despite the fact that, less than two months earlier, the APAO hosted another event in Mississauga at which young children danced to songs celebrating "jihad" and which called on them to "pull the trigger" in order to combat the "despicable ones," B'nai Brith further alleged.

It said that outgoing Green Party leader Elizabeth May and Mississauga Centre Liberal MP Omar Alghabra attended the earlier event.

In the later matter, city officials "belatedly" admitted that policy was "breached," B'nai Brith said.

In an email to *The CJN*, city spokesperson Catherine Monast said the APOA's initial booking "met the city's policy."

However, "there were activities during the booking undertaken by the group that were outside the city's policy and we have addressed this with the group," she added.

She said the city would not disclose details about the nature of the non-compliance. The city "has a privacy obligation to individuals, including those who book and use city facilities," Monast said.

B'nai Brith CEO Michael Mostyn said, "We demand that the City of Mississauga cease renting space to the APAO and any other groups intending to use public facilities to celebrate violence."

Future booking requests by the APAO "will be subject to review having regard to past experience," Monast said.

The APAO's website does not list contact information. A message seeking comment sent to the group's Facebook page was not returned by deadline.

In 2017, police in Peel Region said they had launched an investigation into a rally held in Mississauga Celebration Square that allegedly incited violence and promoted hatred against Jews. ■

THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
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A treasure trove of Jewish history is sitting in a North York basement

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One normally wouldn't consider North York a place where riches lie beneath the ground, but David Birnbaum's basement tells another story.

Neatly arrayed, floor-to-ceiling, in crammed bookcases, filing cabinets, metal shelves, bankers boxes, document cases and bulging manila envelopes is a veritable treasure trove that libraries around the world would love to get their hands on.

There's an Indiana Jones-ish vibe to pulling a dusty tome from a shelf, its leather binding cracked and decaying, or peering at fragments of a centuries-old Hebrew manuscript in a dim light.

It's hard – and seems crass – to put a dollar value on a collection this remarkable. "It's worth millions," Birnbaum told *The CJN*. "We're looking for a good home where it will be properly catalogued and digitized."

That's easier said than done given the collection's sheer size. But of late, two local scholars have embarked on a campaign to convince the University of Toronto's Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library to acquire the storied Birnbaum Archives.

The collection centres almost wholly on two giants of 20th century Jewish thought and scholarship: Nathan Birnbaum (David's grandfather), a hugely influential figure in European Jewry who died in 1937, and Solomon Birnbaum (Nathan's son and David's father), a world-renowned scholar of Yiddish and Hebrew who died in 1989 in Toronto at age 98.

The archives also hold the writings and artworks of two more of Nathan Birnbaum's sons: Menachem, an artist who was murdered at Auschwitz in 1944, and Uriel, a writer and artist who died in 1956.

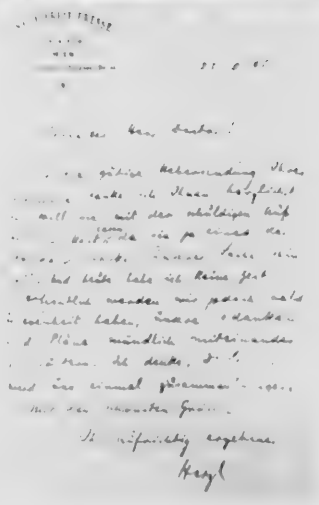
A stone's throw from David Birnbaum's house lie the papers and vast writings of his late brother Eleazar Birnbaum, an expert in Arabic, Persian and Turkish who taught at the University of Toronto and died last October at the age of 89.

There's more: Eleazar's and David's brother, Jacob, was a key founder of the movement struggling on behalf of Soviet Jewry in the 1960s.

By any measure, this was a productive family.

"Yes, they were all very prolific," understated David, who trained as an architect and worked as an environmental planner for the Ontario government. He's curated the archives for 31 years, and now, at age 86, agrees it's time for a [illegible] home where their contents could be preserved and studied.

(Above) David Birnbaum examines some of his family's extensive archives.



(Left) A letter to Nathan Birnbaum from Theodor Herzl.

RON CSILLAG PHOTOS

Asked the size of the archive, which is spread out on two floors of his unassuming house, David sits back in his kitchen chair and thinks. It amounts, he said, to 5,200 letters, between 50,000 and 60,000 papers, documents and manuscripts, and some 3,000 books which have been meticulously catalogued by whether they are by Nathan, Solomon, Uriel or Menachem, about them, or mention them.

A further 2,000 scholarly books, some of them rare, are from Solomon's library.

Among the letters are 18 carefully preserved, handwritten ones from Theodor Herzl to Nathan Birnbaum (the two would have a falling out), and an invitation to speak co-signed by Albert Einstein. The correspondence alone represents a who's who of 20th century Jewish history: Letters to Birnbaum from Sholem Aleichem, Chaim Nachman Bialik, Max Nordau, Martin Buber, and I.L. Peretz, to name a few.

Scribblings, photographs, newspaper clippings, poems, personal notes, it's all here.

The material would interest scholars "for years to come," wrote Prof. Naomi Seidman, of U of T's religion department, to the Fisher Library recently. "We would love to see the Birnbaum Archive housed on the University of Toronto campus, not only for our own research, but also for the opportunities it presents to showcase the remarkable lives of this singular family."

Remarkable barely begins to describe Nathan Birnbaum. Born in Vienna in 1864, he "championed a spectrum of radically opposed movements," according to Kalman Weiser, a professor of Modern Jewish Studies at York University.

Birnbaum's life was a series of progressions – some might say a trajectory – first, as a leading figure in the Zionist movement well before Herzl (Birnbaum is credited with coining the term "Zionism"), then as an architect of Yiddish-based cultural autonomy for Eastern European Jews (he organized the landmark 1908 Yiddish language conference in Czernowitz, modern day Chernivtsi, now in Ukraine), and finally, as a leader in the staunchly anti-secular, anti-Zionist Agudath Israel party. He died in Holland.

Nathan Birnbaum was "a pivotal figure in Jewish nationalist thought and Orthodoxy," whose chameleon-like transformations mirrored European Jewry's responses to the challenges posed by post-Enlightenment forces, noted Weiser.

"His whole life consisted of what a Jew was," David Birnbaum said.

Nathan's son, Solomon Birnbaum, was also a maverick intellectual: An Orthodox Jew who authored the first modern grammar of Yiddish, written in the trenches of the First World War, and who devised an ingenious Yiddish spelling system that was introduced in Orthodox schools in Poland in the 1930s.

After fleeing to England in 1933, he became an expert in Hebrew paleography (the study of ancient writing systems and deciphering historical manuscripts) and epigraphy (the study and interpretation of ancient inscriptions.)

In 1947, he was able to date the Dead Sea Scrolls accurately by studying their scripts – well before radiocarbon dating.

Solomon came to Toronto to join his sons in 1970 and spent his remaining decades continuing his research into the evolution of the Hebrew alphabet, and lesser-known Jewish languages, such as Ladino, Bukharic (spoken in central Asia) and Yevanic (in Greece).

The output of father and son was staggering; it seems as though they saved every scrap of paper in their lives. How it all survived the Holocaust is another conversation.

"The depth and importance of this archive cannot be easily exaggerated," noted the American scholar Jess Olson in his 2013 biography of Nathan Birnbaum.

The archives are indeed "a big deal," said York University's Weiser, who also favours their acquisition by U of T's Fisher Library. "It's the ideal place."

But essentially, it all comes down to money. A benefactor is needed to purchase the collection and donate it.

For Birnbaum, the treasure obviously strikes close to home. "Rather than a dry impersonal historical record of well over 100 years of European Jewish history," he said, the archive "reflects the experiences of those who actually lived that history." ■

INTERNATIONAL

Pompeo, Israelis outraged over UN blacklisting

RAPHAEL AHREN
JERUSALEM

The top U.S. diplomat expressed outrage on Feb. 13, at the UN rights chief's publication of a blacklist of companies that do business in Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

The list's publication "only confirms the unrelenting anti-Israel bias so prevalent at the United Nations," Mike Pompeo said in a statement released by the U.S. State Department.

"I am outraged that High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet published a database of companies operating in Israeli-controlled territories. The United States has long opposed the creation or release of this database, which was mandated by the discredited UN Human Rights Council in 2016," Pompeo said.

He added that the United States would not co-operate with the UN agency's effort to "isolate Israel."

"The United States has not provided, and will never provide, any information to the Office of the High Commissioner to support compilation of these lists and expresses support for U.S. companies referenced. We call upon all UN member states to join us in rejecting this effort, which facilitates the discriminatory boycott, divestment, and sanction (BDS) campaign and delegitimizes Israel. Attempts to isolate Israel run counter to all of our efforts to build conditions conducive to Israeli-Palestinian negotiations that lead to a comprehensive and enduring peace."

The U.S. Ambassador to Israel, David Friedman, also slammed the release of the list, tweeting, "Yet another stain on the already blemished record of the United Nations' reflexive bias against Israel. Commissioner Bachelet, if your focus is truly advancing human rights, you have gotten this exactly wrong!"

Nearly four years in the making, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on Feb.12 unexpectedly published a list of 112 companies that conduct business in Israeli settlements.

Ninety-four of the companies are Israeli, including all major banks, state-owned transportation companies Egged and Israel Railways Corporation, and telecommunications giants Bezeq, HOT and Cellcom. It also lists medium-size companies such as restaurant chain Café Café and Angel Bakeries.

A worker at Angel Bakeries factory. The bakery is one of more than 100 companies blacklisted by the UN for doing business in the West Bank. ABIR SULTAN/FLASH 90 PHOTO

Of the 18 that are foreign, six are based in the United States, four in the Netherlands, three in the U.K., three in France, and one each in Luxembourg and Thailand. They include Motorola, Airbnb, Trip Advisor, Expedia and General Mills (all from the United States), Alstom (from France) and Greenkote (from the U.K).

Israel reacted angrily to the list's publication, denouncing the UN body responsible for compiling it and vowing to protect Israeli financial interests. The Palestinians, meanwhile, celebrated a "victory for international law."

In March 2016, the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva passed a resolution requesting the compilation of a database listing "activities that raised particular human rights concerns" in the Palestinian territories. Such activities were defined as providing material and services that would support the expansion of, or help "maintain," Israeli settlements.

Other activities that got companies on the list include the use of the West Bank's natural resources "in particular water and land," the pollution of Palestinian villages and "captivity of the Palestinian financial and economic markets, as well as practises that disadvantage Palestinian enterprises, including through restrictions on movement, administrative and legal constraints."

Israel, the United States and the U.K. for years tried to block the publication of the blacklist. Many other countries were also opposed to releasing it. It was unclear why it was released last week. Israeli diplomatic officials said they were only given one hour warning before the document was published.

According to Israeli officials, Bachelet has consistently refused to meet with Israeli diplomats to discuss the blacklist.

Israel's Foreign Ministry said it was suspending its ties with the High Commissioner for Human Rights, though it was not immediately clear what practical implications the decision would have. The commissioner's office has representatives stationed in Israel, but they are not known to enjoy good working relations with Israeli diplomats. Officials in Jerusalem last week merely said that any requests they may have will not be answered.

The United States left the Council in June 2018, citing its "chronic bias against Israel."

"We will contest this [blacklist] with all of our strength," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told Army Radio on Feb. 11. "We will gain recognition for our sovereignty over these communities and this will cancel its effect."

"Boycotting Israeli companies does not advance the cause of peace and does not build confidence between the sides. We call on our friends around the world to speak out against this shameful initiative which reminds us of dark periods in our history," President Reuven Rivlin said at an event the next day at his official residence in Jerusalem.

Businesses may ask to be delisted if they can prove that they no longer provide material support to Israeli settlements, the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said Wednesday. The list will be updated annually.

Palestinian Authority Foreign Minister Riyad al-Malki welcomed the list.

"The publication of this list of companies and parties working in the settlements is a victory for international law," he said in a statement posted on the ministry's Facebook page. He also urged member states of the UN Human Rights Council to study the list and recommend and instruct the companies cited on it to terminate their operations in the settlements.

"I am conscious this issue has been, and will continue to be, highly contentious," said Bachelet.

"However, after an extensive and meticulous review process, we are satisfied this fact-based report reflects the serious consideration that has been given to this unprecedented and highly complex mandate, and that it responds appropriately to the Human Rights Council's request contained in resolution 31/36," Bachelet said, referring to the council resolution that asked for the report.

The database's publication comes only three months after the European Court of Justice ruled that the labelling regimen for Israeli products from the West Bank was mandatory.

The Yesha Council umbrella group of settler leaders issued a statement Wednesday accusing the Human Rights Council of anti-Semitism and urging Israeli citizens to make special efforts to purchase goods made in the settlements. ■

Time of Israel
timesofisrael.com

Analysis

Could we have a Jewish president in the White House?

Ron Kampeas
WASHINGTON JTA

Bernie Sanders GAGE SKIDMORE, WIKIMEDIA COMMONS PHOTO

Bernie Sanders and Mike Bloomberg have much in common besides running for the Democratic nomination for president: they're in their upper 70s, had hardscrabble upbringings and have had contentious relations with the party whose endorsement they now seek.

And both are seeking the chance to make history as the first-ever Jewish presidential nominee.

Sanders, the Vermont senator, made a strong bid for the Democratic nomination four years ago and has sustained his avid supporter base into this campaign. Bloomberg, a billionaire media magnate and former mayor of New York City, is mounting his first drive for national office.

Together they represent the best chance ever for a Jewish American to hold the nation's highest office. At one point this month FiveThirtyEight, the leading forecaster of presidential politics, gave Sanders a 1 in 2 chance of winning the nomination and Bloomberg a slim chance of his own – meaning that a Jewish candidate was seen as more likely than not to be the ultimate nominee. (The chances have declined since, even though Sanders won the New Hampshire primary last week.)

The candidates also reflect a tension within the American Jewish community. While most Jewish Americans are Democrats, some are more progressive inheritors of the left-wing activism that characterized early 20th-century Jewish politics. Others, wary of protecting their assets in uncertain times or deeply attached to Israel and the right-wing politics that have prevailed there for a decade, take a more centrist approach. For them, a candidate like Bloomberg is potentially attractive.

The path between now and November is long and winding, and it's totally possible that neither Sanders nor Bloomberg will ultimately appear on the ballot. But here's how they could – and why that matters for U.S. Jews.

The Sanders equation is widely known: leverage the campaign's large, committed volunteer base to get out the vote in every primary. Because the elections are no longer winner-takes-all, Sanders can pick up delegates in every primary – and can chip away toward a plurality by the end of the primary season.

He has his eye on California, where voters tend to be progressive. The Golden State looms large because it has the largest delegate take – 416 of the 3,768 delegates who vote in the first round at the convention – and because this year it moved up its primary from June to Super Tuesday, the March 3 date when 16 nominating contests take place.

Walking away from California with a majority of the delegates would deliver momentum to the candidate.

Sanders has visited the state far more than any other candidate, according to the *Sacramento Bee*. And at least until Bloomberg entered the Democratic race in November, he also was spending more money there than any other White House hopeful.

In past years, it was generally clear by early May who the candidate would be for both parties. In 2020, however, with a crowded Democratic field and the end of winner-take-all primaries, the same timeline might not hold true. That means Sanders and his supporters are under pressure to execute a high-level ground game in every state going forward.

Bloomberg, who is funding his own campaign, also is making a play for California. He has spent US$13 million on advertising there and campaigned in the state while the other candidates focused on the early states once considered critical to securing the nomination: Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina and Nevada.

Bloomberg is likely pleased to see Sanders take the early lead – the Vermont senator and progressive flag-bearer essentially tied in Iowa with former South Bend, Ind., Mayor Pete Buttigieg before eking out a victory in New Hampshire. A strong Sanders performance in the early nominating contests will help clear the deck of moderates heading into Super Tuesday, leaving the center lane open to Bloomberg.

> *For Bloomberg, the leading forecaster gave Sanders a 1 in 2 chance of winning the nomination.*

The former mayor has campaigned in all the Super Tuesday states and built up his staff in them, as well as in the states that vote on the two subsequent Tuesdays, before investing in other states. That's a clear indicator of how much he is investing in being a major force by mid-March.

The goal, according to people familiar with Bloomberg's strategy, is to amass enough delegates throughout the primary season that he becomes the presumptive centrist. If that happens, and Sanders maintains his grip on the left, the Democratic party will have to reckon with the identity issue that mirrors the divide within American Jewry: Do we swing left or carve out a middle lane? Bloomberg is banking on Americans making the second choice – and picking him to face off against incumbent Donald Trump in November.

"The results from New Hampshire show that Democrats must urgently consolidate around a candidate who can beat Donald Trump, and Mike Bloomberg is best positioned to build the broad coalition necessary to win in November," a Bloomberg campaign spokesman told the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*.

According to FiveThirtyEight, there is currently a 1 in 4 chance that no one candidate will win enough delegates through the primary process to guarantee a choice at the Democratic National Convention in Milwaukee in July.

If it comes down to Bloomberg and Sanders, Bloomberg – or more precisely his money – may have the advantage. The 3,979 pledged delegates will be relieved of their pledges after the first round of voting, and they will be joined by 770 or so "superdelegates," congressional lawmakers and party officials among them.

That's a crowd that's ripe for the enticements that Bloomberg has been known to deliver to constituencies that otherwise might be less than charmed by him. Bloomberg is known for his generosity to the campaigns and causes of potential supporters. He also had a record as mayor of using his own money to mute opposition.

As a presidential candidate, Bloomberg has racked up endorsements from African-American lawmakers and mayors – many of them past beneficiaries of his largesse – as a means of blunting his past embrace of discriminatory "stop and frisk" policing. It seems to have worked (and Bloomberg has also apologized for the practice): A Quinnipiac poll shows Bloomberg making headway among African-Americans.

But for argument's sake, let's say that by June, Elizabeth Warren, the progressive, is duking it out with Pete Buttigieg, the centrist.

Thus even with no Jewish nominee this year, the notion that a Jewish nominee was unelectable (one that Bloomberg once cited to explain why he chose not to run in 2008) has nonetheless been all but erased.

Who's waiting in the wings? Democrats adored Rep. Adam Schiff of California for his role leading the impeachment of Trump, and there was talk on social media of a possible Schiff run for the presidency.

And Trump's campaign manager, Brad Parscale, has said that the Trumps are set to become a Kennedy-like dynasty.

Parscale elaborated at California's Republican party convention last August.

"I think you see that from Don Jr. I think you see that from Ivanka. You see it from Jared. You see it from all," he said.

That would be Trump's Jewish daughter, Ivanka Trump, and her Jewish husband, Jared Kushner. ■

Berlin backs Israel in ICC war crimes investigation

RAPHAEL AHREN
JERUSALEM

Germany last Friday backed Israel's position at the International Criminal Court, which is currently weighing whether to open an investigation into possible war crimes committed in Gaza and the West Bank.

Like the Czech Republic on Feb. 13, Berlin submitted a request to become an *amicus curiae* — a "friend of the court" who is not a party to the case but wants to offer its views.

Both countries were expected to submit written legal opinion positing that The Hague does not have jurisdiction to investigate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Austria, which in recent years has become closer to the Jewish state, was also expected to file an application.

In its filing, Germany noted it was "a staunch supporter of the International Criminal Court and its organs, and a leader of the fight against impunity." It also noted that it has long been a proponent of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

But, it argued, "The scope of the Court's territorial jurisdiction pursuant to Article 12 of the Rome Statute does not extend to the occupied Palestinian territories. Article 12 of the Rome Statute presupposes that there is a "state" that has the ability under international law to delegate territorial jurisdiction to the Court with respect to the relevant cases.

"Palestine does not possess nor did it ever possess the jurisdiction that it would need to delegate to the Court in order for the Court to exercise jurisdiction."

Other states, including Canada, Australia and Hungary, have taken Israel's side in the debate over jurisdiction, but have not asked to submit written legal opinions to the court.

Knesset Speaker Yuli Edelstein praised Berlin Friday, saying that "the European Union's most important power stands by Israel in confronting Palestinian incitement and Palestinian hypocrisy."

The Israeli Foreign Ministry declined to comment on the matter.

"It is really great that many countries are agreeing with our principled position," a senior legal official told the *Times of Israel*. He noted that Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit and the Foreign Ministry have published lengthy statements and explanations as to why they think the ICC does not have jurisdiction to launch an investigation.

The International Criminal Court building in The Hague. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS PHOTO

On Dec. 20, the ICC's chief prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, said she had concluded her half-decade long preliminary examination of the "situation in Palestine" and has "reasonable basis to believe that war crimes were committed" by both the Israel Defence Forces and Hamas and other "Palestinian armed groups."

At the same time, she acknowledged that The Hague may not have the jurisdiction to deal with Israel/Palestine. Hence, she asked for a ruling by three ICC judges to determine the scope of the court's territorial jurisdiction.

The prosecutor herself believes "Palestine," which acceded to the Rome Statute, the court's foundational document, in early 2015, is enough of a state for the purposes of transferring criminal jurisdiction over its territory to the court.

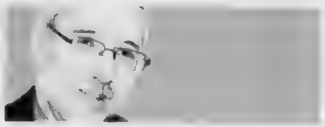
Israel has long argued that the ICC lacks jurisdiction over the case because there is no sovereign Palestinian state that could delegate to the court criminal jurisdiction over its territory and nationals.

It is now up to a so-called pre-trial chamber to rule on the matter. The three judges of this chamber – Péter Kovács of Hungary, Marc Perrin de Brichambaut of France and Reine Adélaïde Sophie Alapini-Gansou of Benin – invited "Palestine, Israel, and victims in the Situation in the State of Palestine, to submit written observations" on the matter by March 16. ■

Times of Israel
Timesofisrael.com

Opinion

As a sovereign nation, only Israel can determine its future



Gerald Steinberg

Whether U.S. President Donald Trump's long-awaited peace plan (a.k.a. "the deal of the century") produces any lasting impact remains to be seen, but at least it re-awakened debate on borders, the future of Zionism, Israeli democracy, and long-term relations with Palestinians.

And while many analysts dismiss the plan as a political stunt to help Netanyahu win the third Israeli election on March 2, this is overly simplistic. The polls in Israel do not show any increase in support for the Likud and other right wing parties – if anything, they lost some ground.

In part, this reflects the confusion surrounding the questions of annexation of territory taken in 1967, which is the essential element in the Trump plan. Initially, the Americans seemed to give Netanyahu a green light to incorporate neighbourhoods near Jerusalem, and parts of the Jordan Valley essential for Israeli security. But then the United States pulled back; presidential son-in-law Jared Kushner told Israel to wait until after the election, and then Ambassador David Friedman repeated this warning.

Also, Blue and White leader, and Netanyahu's rival for leadership, Benny Gantz was also invited to Washington and announced that if he becomes prime minister, he too would proceed with annexation.

More importantly, what seemed like a friendly gesture from the Trump administration now appears to be another in a series of outside efforts to determine Israel's future. But as a sovereign nation, Israel – not the United States, United Nations, or any other outside power – must decide. More than 50 years after the temporary "occupation" began, the uncertainty is no longer tolerable. And given the intensity with which Palestinians cling to the "return to 1947" myths, there is no realistic hope for a negotiated agreement.

At the same time, haphazard "facts on the ground" created a situation in which hundreds of thousands of Israelis beyond the pre-1967 Green Line are subject to laws which are different from the rest of the country.

The 1993 Oslo framework created a self-governing Palestinian Authority (or proto-state) which includes over 90 per cent of the Arab inhabitants of Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) and Gaza. In order to keep Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, this structure needs to be maintained and strengthened.

But to determine borders and all that accompanies this move, Israelis must decide on the details – not Americans or anyone else. It is up to us to take responsibility for our future and for the direction of Zionism, and to weigh the risks and benefits of the different options.

For example, Trump's map includes "land swaps" in which the northern triangle area which has a large Arab population would become part of a Palestinian state, and its residents would no longer be Israelis. In exchange, two unpopulated zones in the southern Negev desert would become either Palestinian or jointly controlled – in either case, no longer part of Israel.

Land swapping is a 19th century international practice that has long since been rejected. A land and population exchange has complex implications and needs to be carefully debated, not simply accepted, sight unseen.

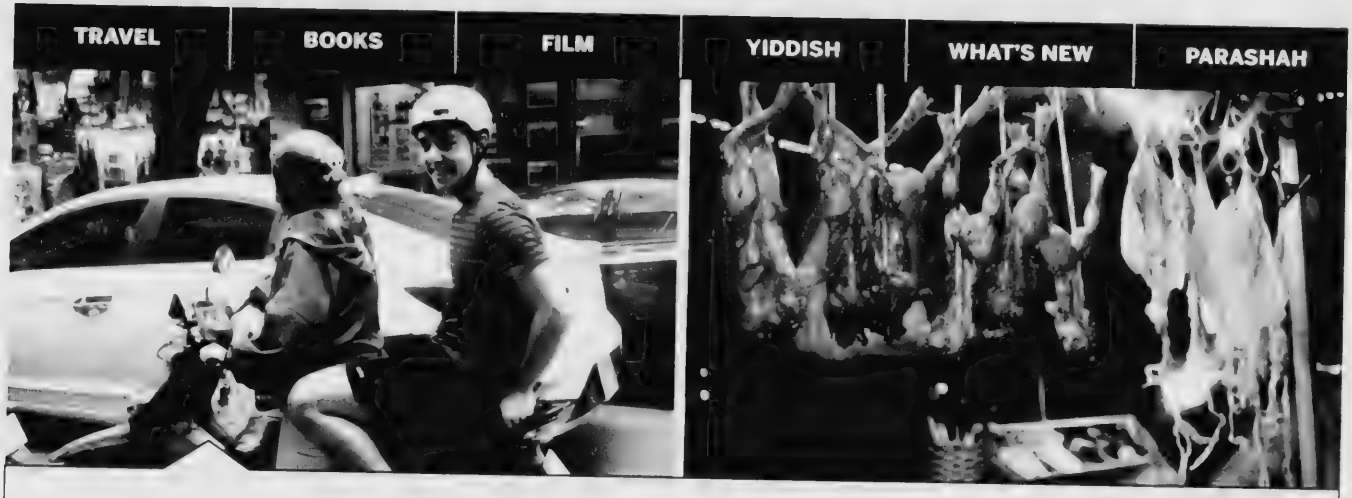
The implications of Palestinian statehood also needed to be considered carefully. Some Israelis argue that any foreign sovereignty over Judea and Samaria is unacceptable – this was Menachem Begin's position when he negotiated the peace treaty with Egypt in 1979.

Begin rejected annexation of Judea and Samaria because the large Palestinian population would become full citizens, and then Israel would cease to be the nation-state of the Jewish people. Instead, he agreed to limited Palestinian autonomy, but this approach has reached a dead end.

By returning these issues to the Israeli agenda, the American proposal has done us a major favour, regardless of whether the details go anywhere. It is now up to Israelis, and Palestinians if they are willing to accept Israeli legitimacy and enter into serious negotiations, to decide where to go with it. ■

Jewish Life

The writers's son, Jason Aginsky, takes a motorbike scooter tour, left. And, though it might turn your stomach, frogs, such as these pictured at a market stall, dogs and insects are for sale to eat. LAUREN KRAMER PHOTOS



VIETNAM: Trying to reinvent itself

LAUREN KRAMER
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

We'd never been so relieved to see falafel on a menu.

My family and I traipsed into the modest Chabad restaurant in Hoi An, Vietnam, famished after five days filled with dietary challenges. We could barely contain our excitement as we waited for hummus, falafel and heaped plates of french fries to arrive at our table.

Eating was a problem for us in this southeast Asian country, where pork and shellfish are the most ubiquitous ingredients anywhere. In the markets we saw gigantic mangoes and mouth-wateringly large avocados, but these fruits were nowhere to be found in the restaurants. "We grow these fruits in our backyard and they're so common, we don't want to eat them when we eat out," one local explained to us.

There are many destinations in the world that offer a highly-polished tourist experience. You know it's polished when local vendors greet you enthusiastically and make a concerted effort to communicate, when your tourism experiences are trash-free and when you can cross a road without fearing for your life.

Vietnam is not one of these places. Real life hits you in the face here, forcing you to acknowledge the deep divide between first and third-world living, and the still-raw history of war and colonialism on the physical and cultural landscape.

In Hanoi we hired scooter drivers to guide us through the city, too terrified by the haphazard traffic to drive ourselves. At one stop our guide pointed out the remains of an American war plane, shot down 50 years ago. It crashed into a downtown lake and sits there to this day, a massive hunk of machinery slowly rusting away.

We passed street vendors selling the meat of butchered dogs, their mouths open in a grotesque grimace. Later, as we moved north to south through the country and wandered in the night markets we saw Gucci knockoffs for sale right next to vendors selling barbecued frogs, doves, fried crickets, fat silkworms and an eye-openingly large selection of spiny shellfish.

One of our guides was serious on the subject of food. "During the famine of 1945 up to two million of our people starved to death," he reflected. "So though it might turn your stomach to see dogs, frogs, birds and insects for sale as food, remember, everything has a story. Google cannot explain it all."

I could write about Vietnam's gorgeous resort destinations and the warmth of the South China Sea as we floated in the gentle waves. We experienced this, too, and loved it. Tourism is growing in the country and large hotel chains like Marriott and Intercontinental are colonizing the beachside real estate and attracting increasing numbers of visitors.

But as you bask in the waves it's hard to ignore the trash floating in from the mainland. The island of Phu Quoc is an hour's flight from Saigon, home to nine million, and with an unrefined trash management system, the quantities of plastic washing up on the beach is disheartening. Our hotel employed three locals who worked the beach dawn to dusk daily, just collecting and disposing of the never-ending stream of trash.

"You owe it to the Vietnamese people to visit the War Remnant Museum," my cousin stated flatly before we left. So in Saigon we joined the throngs of visitors ambling slowly through the graphic exhibits of what the Vietnamese call the American War on Vietnam.

For sure, the accompanying text, written by the Communist party, was one-sided, but the visuals were at once riveting, shocking and devastating. We saw pictures of rice paddies bombed to bits, Vietnamese farmers being tortured, bodies dead and bloody littering the roadside. The Agent Orange display was even more horrific, with visuals of the physical deformation caused by toxins sprayed on the land in the name of American warfare.

The cleanup of those poisons is still in progress today, and the suffering caused by Agent Orange chemicals persists. One guide described her aunt, a woman in her 50s with the mind of a child, unable to work, marry or live a productive life because of harm caused by chemical warfare. I had come to the country thinking America's efforts to fight communism in Vietnam were noble. The War Remnant Museum changed my mind completely.

If you're looking for an all-inclusive-resort style vacation, avoid Vietnam like the plague. This country is not for you. But if you can open your mind to another culture without condescension and through your travels, try to understand the forces that shaped Vietnam today, you'll find it a riveting experience. Yes, you'll see some pristine beaches, tropical jungle and big-name hotels sporting gorgeous turquoise swimming pools. But you'll also see a place still wracked with scars from the past, trying hard to deal with its history of oppression while actively reinventing itself to keep pace with the rest of the world. ■

Liberating looted Jewish texts

MARTY LOCKSHIN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

At the very same time that the Nazis were murdering one-third of world Jewry, they were, amazingly, gathering Jewish books, archives and Judaica to be preserved. With characteristic efficiency, they created an agency, the Reichsleiter Rosenberg Taskforce (*Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg* or ERR) that looted Judaica on a huge scale from European countries they captured.

The ERR was particularly interested in the thriving Jewish community of Vilnius (or Vilna), the so-called "Jerusalem of Lithuania." Vilnius, where the towering religious figure Rabbi Elijah ben Solomon Zalman, (the Vilna Gaon, 1720-1797) had lived, was at the time the leading centre for the study of (generally secular) Yiddish literature and culture. The world-famous YIVO (Yidisher Visnshaftlekher Institut, or Institute for Jewish Research), which today houses 23 million archival items and 400,000 volumes in its transplanted home in New York, was founded in Vilnius in 1925 and attracted scholars from around the world.

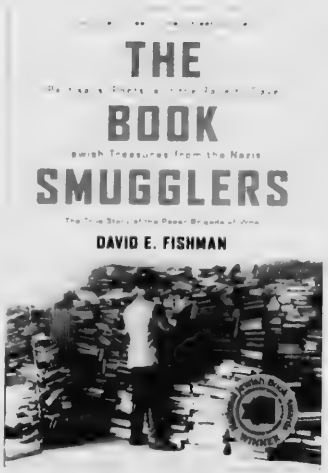
Even after the Soviet Union occupied Vilnius in 1940, YIVO and other Jewish institutions continued with their work. The most popular book in the thriving Vilnius Jewish lending library was, ominously, *Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, which told the story of one town in Turkey during the Armenian genocide. The Vilnius Jews apparently sensed that they could be facing a similar fate. Soon after the Nazis captured Vilnius in June 1941, Jewish cultural life came to a crashing halt and the ERR started looting its cultural institutions.

The Book Smugglers: Partisans, Poets and the Race to Save Jewish Treasures from the Nazis: The True Story of the Paper Brigade of Vilna, by Prof. David E. Fishman of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, tells the gripping tale of the efforts of a few brave Jews to save the Vilnius community's cultural treasures, especially those of YIVO.

The Nazi plundering effort in Vilnius was co-ordinated by Johannes Pohl, an ordained Catholic priest, who had trained in Semitics and Hebrew and even studied in Jerusalem from 1932 to 1934. He left the priesthood, joined the Nazi party, and, once his Jewish colleagues were fired, found work in the 1930s as a Judaica librarian. When Pohl took charge of the ERR in Vilnius, he appointed Noah Prylucki to organize the looted material. Prylucki was then the director of YIVO, having succeeded to the position after Max Weinreich, YIVO's founding director, moved to New York in 1940. Prylucki was killed by the Nazis in late 1941. (On Prylucki, see the Canadian Jewish Book Award-winning book by my York University colleague, Prof. Kalman Weiser: *Jewish People, Yiddish Nation: Noah Prylucki and the Folkists in Poland*.)

The ERR assembled a team of knowledgeable Jews to sort and select books, artwork and archives to send to Germany for preservation; rejected material would be destroyed or recycled. (Dozens of Torah scrolls were sent to leather factories; other books and papers were incinerated or sent to paper mills.)

Other Jews derisively called this team "the paper brigade." The Nazis kept many Jews alive for awhile to do back-breaking physical labour. The paper brigade had easier conditions, but they had to do the terrible work of handing over the "best" Jewish materials to the Nazis and supervising the destruction of the rest.



The Book Smugglers: Partisans, Poets and the Race to Save Jewish Treasures from the Nazis; The True Story of the Paper Brigade of Vilna
by David E. Fishman
ForeEdge Book Collectors, Nefarious and Noble

Fishman tells the moving story of the brave members of the paper brigade who often risked their lives to smuggle and hide Jewish books and materials. Most were killed in the war, some after escaping and joining the partisans. When the Soviets recaptured Vilnius in 1944, many hiding places in the ghetto and the YIVO building had been reduced to rubble, so only some precious materials survived. Incredibly, the Soviets insisted that these materials belonged to them, although they had no interest in preserving or making them accessible. So once again, after the war, Jews took clandestine actions to liberate their cultural materials.

After the defeat of Germany, some 100,000 Hebrew and Yiddish volumes, and even more archival materials, were found in the Nazi Institute for the Investigation of the Jewish Question in Frankfurt. But this was just the tip of the iceberg. Amazingly, in the last months of the war, while Germany, including Frankfurt, was being bombed by the Allies and the Nazis were redoubling their efforts to kill Jews more quickly, they found time to ship a million volumes of Jewish books from Frankfurt to the nearby town of Hungen for safekeeping, assuming that the Allies would not bother bombing it. The disputes about repatriating the books and materials found in Hungen and Frankfurt make for intriguing reading.)

As a result of the Nazi period, many Jews soured on the famous German *Wissenschaft*, "scientific" or scholarly study. In 1946, even the scholarly Max Weinreich wrote *Hitler's Professors: The Part of Scholarship in Germany's Crimes Against the Jewish People*.

On the other hand, the Jews of the paper brigade had noble scholarly motivations. "Why did these men and women risk their lives for the sake of books and papers?" asks Fishman. He answers: "They were making an existential statement ... that literature and culture were ultimate values ... greater than the life of any individual or group. Since they were sure that they would soon die, they chose to connect their remaining lives, and if necessary their deaths, with the things that truly mattered ... (They) were also expressing their faith that there would be a Jewish people after the war, which would need to repossess its cultural treasures."

Thanks in part to their bravery, we did. ■

Mazel Tov

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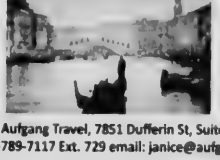

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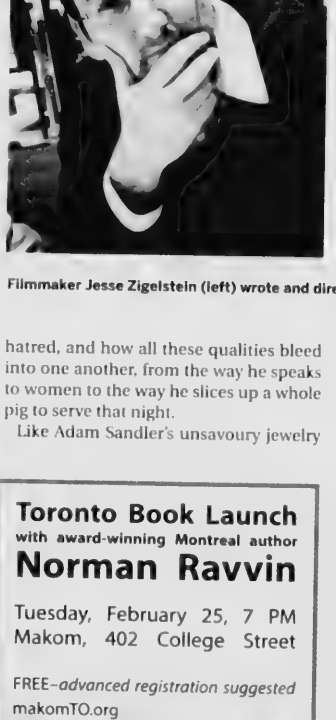
THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
FEBRUARY 20, 2020

A tense portrait of the life of a head chef

MICHAEL FRAIMAN
mfraiman@thecjn.ca



Filmmaker Jesse Zigelstein (left) wrote and directed *Nose to Tail*, starring Aaron Abrams. MOTION OFFENSE PRODUCTION PHOTO

One of the best scenes in the new Canadian indie film *Nose to Tail* comes early on. The aggressively stubborn head chef, Daniel, who alienates everyone and is slowly, unintentionally, dismantling his entire life, is standing outside behind his restaurant, complaining about a former employee to a current one. He hears a defence of the guy who quit, but won't listen. "Of course it's understandable from his point of view," he yells, exasperated. "Nobody's a villain to themselves. Hitler had reasons."

The employee doesn't laugh, but it's a funny moment – and one of the more poignant (if obvious) ones in the entire film. For 90 minutes, audience members could be forgiven for desperately wanting this guy to look in the mirror and ask himself, "Am I the jerk?"

Nose to Tail, the debut feature by writer-director Jesse Zigelstein that opened last week across Canada, analyzes Daniel's compulsive hideousness through an unflattering lens. The character study shows his ambition, talent, desperation and hatred, and how all these qualities bleed into one another, from the way he speaks to women to the way he slices up a whole pig to serve that night.

Like Adam Sandler's unsavoury jewelry dealer in *Uncut Gems*, Daniel is an angry, uncompromising man whose subtle Jewish anxieties manifest not in nebbish awkwardness, but in outright toxic masculinity.

"He's Jewish to the extent that the character is an alter ego for the writer and director," Zigelstein explains with a laugh. "The character is an exaggerated – verging on caricature – version of a kind of artistic id run rampant."

Speaking with *The CJN* over the phone during a visit to his hometown Toronto, Zigelstein describes his film as "a cautionary tale about the perils of uncompromising ambition, and how destructive – and self-destructive – it can be if your priorities force you to place a certain goal above all your interpersonal relationships."

Nose to Tail traces a single pivotal day in Daniel's chic, high-end restaurant in downtown Toronto. He yells, belittles, insults and gets physically in the face of everyone he meets: his employees, a food blogger, a potential investor, his ex-wife and the young guy running the food truck across the street.

With claustrophobic cinematography and grey wintry skies, the film is a snappily paced, if sometimes bluntly written debut from Zigelstein, who has spent years working and networking in Los Angeles after graduating from York University.

Zigelstein decided to return to Toronto to make this film not out of patriotic love, alas, but because "I knew it could be done here," he says. Canada's tax incentives, combined with his local knowledge and professional union connections, meant he could actually produce a feature film more securely and cost-effectively than if he stuck around in California.

"I very consciously conceived and wrote the film to be manageable on this scale," Zigelstein says. He started with a realistic budget, then wrote a script to match – a single day, a single location, a small cast and a short shooting schedule.

Zigelstein and his casting director found a local Jewish actor, Aaron Abrams, to play Daniel. The film orbits around him: his controlled outbursts, screwdriver face and blast-furnace monologues propel the film to work as well as it does.

In the world of the movie, of course, it's that same temper that tears things apart.

While Zigelstein has never worked in a restaurant, his ex-wife was a sommelier who owned a wine store in L.A., allowing Zigelstein a glimpse into the world of fine dining.

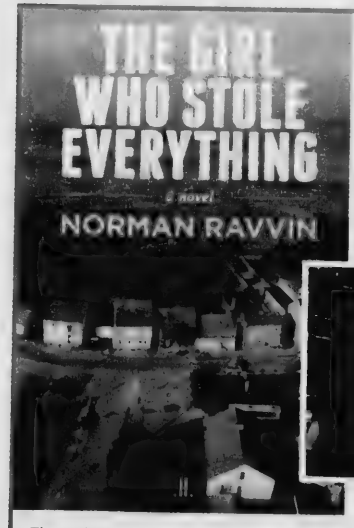
"For a long time, I've had a very up-close view of how those worlds work behind the scenes," he says. He supplemented that knowledge with research into the gritty reality of high-end kitchens, reading books like *Heat*, about Mario Batali, and *Kitchen Confidential* by Anthony Bourdain.

"It was important to have as much realistic texture to have the kind of dramatic conflicts that propel the narrative," he says.

To that end, having the main character be Jewish turns out incidental to the plot, but fundamental to the character.

"I do identify to some degree with the inherited cultural tradition of American Jewish or Canadian writers. Even though, if you talk about Philip Roth or Mordecai Richler, they're a couple generations removed from their firsthand experience, there is something residual that I identify with. It's not the dominant principle from which I work or live my life, but it's residual." ■

Nose to Tail opened in select theatres in Toronto, Calgary and Winnipeg on Feb. 14.



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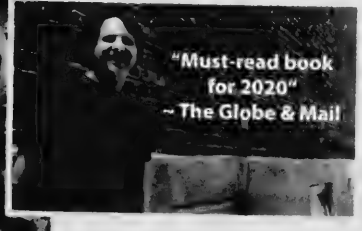

The Girl Who Stole Everything is a fresh portrait of the relationship between prewar Polish shtetl life and Jewish lives in Canada today. Join the author in conversation with CJN Editor, Yoni Goldstein.

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דאָ ליגן מיר פאר אייער אכטונג אן ארטיקל. געשריבן אין 1991 .פון אברהם קארפינאוויטטש, דער זוילנער און ישראלדיקער שרייבער. איך האב עס פארקלערט זיך אין ליבע,...אלין אין דער העלבער שפראך...יעדעס פאלק מיט זיין לשון.

מיט יידיש, אבעה, איז עס ליידער ניט אזוי. נרויסע טיילן פון אונדזער פאלק נתן די לאנד־שפראכן, ווי זיי ווינען און רייזן יידיש איז פארוואנדלט געוואָרן אין א באזונדערן יום־טוב, פון וועלכן מיר דאַרפן נעניסן א באזונדערע פרייד. א פרייד, וואָס פאריניקט אונדז אין אין משפחה. אָס בין איך א יידישער שרייבער און פיל זיך פאַרבונדן מיט אלע יידן אין נאָרער וועלט, ווי מיט ברידער און שוועסטער, ווי מיט נאָענטע קרובים. אָס זיך איך אין דער רעאַקציע פון דער צייטונג "ביראָבידזשאנער שטערן", שרייב אן ארטיקל און פיל זיך פאַרבונדן מיט דעם ביראָבידזשאנער יידיש; שבט דורך הונדערטער אומזעבארע פאַדעם פון אפשטאפּ און בענקשאפּט צו אלין, וואָס איז חורב געוואָרן אין פארשניטן נעוואָרן דורך דער שוועדר פון די רוצחים אין אונדזער חורבן. מע זאָל אונדז פארווארפן אויף א וויסן ברענן, ערגעץ אין א מידבה, וועלן מיר נאָך איין סאָג זיין צוזאמען אן זיך פילן ווי קרובים. וועט מען פרענן פארוואָס? וויל נאָך דעם, וואָס מיר האָבן איבערגעלעבט...**אז אין אָס דעם פינצטער ים פון זכרונות וועגן יענער צייט, האָבן מיר אין ליכטיק אינדזעלע, וואָס ניט אונדז א סוף־פון פרייד. דאָס אינדזעלע הייסט יידיש־לשון.** און וואָס מער מיר שפּאַנען אויף דעם שטיקל באָדן, וואָס די כוואליעס פון דער צייט וויל אין אלע זיינע אים דערשרינקען, אלין מער פרייד ברענגט אונדז דער מינדסטער אפּקלאַנג פון יידיש אין אלע זיינע פארביקע נואַנסן און שאטירונגען. וויל יידיש איז די היים, די היים פון סאמע־מאמע. יידיש איז דאָס שסעטל, פון וואַנען מיר שסאָמען. דאָס איז דער ניגן פון אונדזערע זיידעס. יידיש איז דאָס מעשה־ביכל, וואָס די באָבע האָט געלייענט. יידיש איז די טעאַטער־פּארשסעלונג. שבת נאָך מיטיק האָט מען דאַרט נעזונגען אויף דער בינע לידער, וועלכע האָבן נעהאַלפן איבערקומען א שווערן ארבעסס־טאָג אין דער וואַכן. אונדזערע קינדער דאַרפן ווייל, אז מיר האָבן נענטצ יידיש ניט בלויז אינעם טאָגטעגלעכן לעבן, נאָר אויך צו דערפריין די נשמה שבת און יום־טוב. מע דאַרף זיי דערציילן וויפל פרייד ליגט אין אונדזער יידיש לשון. זאָלן זיי ווייסן, אז דאָס וואַרעמע יידישע פּחדעלע, וואָס האָס אויפגעהערט שפּילן אויף דער יידישער נאס, איז דערפאַר, ווייל מערדער האָבן צעריסן חיענע סטרונעס.

מע וועט זאָגן, אז יידיש איז שוין מער ניט קיין איינגעהער אין אונדזערע היימָה וויי עס איז געווען אמאָל. ס'איז אמת; אָבער אויב יידיש איז ניט פאראן אין אונדזערע שטיבעלע, איז די פאראן אין אונדזערע הערצער, און אין א האַרץ, ווי באוווסט, פאַרהיט זיך אלץ בעסער. אין האַרץ קאָן זיך פארקריצן דאָס יידישע וואַרט און מאכן ציטערן אונדזער נעמיט. אין דרוק פון דער צייט האָס מען פארגעסן, אז יידיש איז האָס אייניקע לשון אויף דער וועלט, וואָס איז נעשאפּענען קענגאיבער דעם מאשיךגעווען פון אונדזער גרויסמסטן שונא! יידיש איז ניט אפּגעשוואכט נעוואָרן, וויל אירע באנצער אומגעבראכט! די קענגער פאריואָרפן. יידיש איז אפּגעשוואכט נעוואָרן, וויל מע האָס אירע באנצער אומגעבראכט! די קענגער פון ארופּזעצן צורוק אריפן קאָפּ פון אונדזער לשון יידיש די פארדינסט קרקן, פארגעסן, אז נאָך איוורים איז יידיש די צווייטע שפראך, וואָס באניצט זיך מיט דעם פירקאנסטיקן אות פון דער תורה און דערביבער דאַרף זי זיין הילוק ביי אונדז, אזוי ווי דאָס לשון פון דער תורה. אונדזערע נאָענסטע האבן נעשעפּס־שעט אין דער לעצטער רגע פאר זייער אומקום יידישע ווערטער, זיי זיינען אוועק אין זייער לעצטן וועג מיט יידיש אויף די ליפּן. אין אירשווין האָס מען ניט נערעדט קיין איוורים.

מע קאָן צו אונדז קומען מיט סענות, אז יידן האָבן נערעדט אויך אנדערע שפּראַכן. אָבער מע פארגעסס דערביי צו מאכן א פארגלייך, וואָס וועט נעשאפּן יידיש אין וואָס וועט נעשאפּן אן אנדער אומגאנסטאָס דעם יידן. פארשטענדלעך, אז דאָ רעדט מען נישט וועגן דעם היינטצייטיקן איוורים, וואָס האָס וויכטיקע דערנרייכונגען אין קולטור און ליטעראטור.

דעריבער דאַרף אונדז די יידיש־ירושה ברענגען נישט בלויז פרייד, נאָר אויך קענען שאַלצירן אויף דעם נרויסן רייכסום פון אָס דער ירושה. שלום־עליכם, מענדעלע מוכר־ספרים, שלום אש, איציק מאַנגער – אָס די אלע גינאַנטן פון דער יידישער ליטעראטור, וואָס א נאנצע וועלט באווונדערט זיי ביז היינטיקן סאָג – זיי האָבן דאָך נעשאפּן די אוצרות פון דער יידישער קולטור. די נאנצע וועלט עסט די פרוכט פון אָס די אלע שאפונגען."

Photographing disabilities

BARBARA SILVERSTEIN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

When Ophira Calof was growing up she thought she was accident-prone. She was clumsy and she had falls. Her parents thought she'd grow out of it, she recalled.

But when Calof, 26, attended university her physical condition deteriorated. "It all came rushing in," she said when she was finally diagnosed with Ehlers-Danlos syndrome (EDS), a genetic disorder that affects connective tissue. "I had to find a way forward."

And she did. Calof — originally from Ottawa — became a writer, performer, and producer. This month she's bringing attention to EDS by curating *We're Not Waiting*, a new photography exhibit now running at the Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre (MNJCC).

She worked closely with award-winning photographer Chorong Kim to create an exhibit that celebrates the lives that people with EDS have created for themselves. The exhibit, which opened Feb. 9, runs until Feb. 26 in honour of Jewish Disability Awareness and Inclusion Month at the MNJCC.

"We're living our lives in whatever way works for us," Calof wrote in her notes about the exhibit. "We're not waiting for society to create space, but finding a way forward ourselves."

Kim, a former resident of Victoria, met Calof's brother at the University of Victoria, where she worked as a photographer and video producer. After moving to Toronto she connected with Calof.

"We became good friends," Kim recounted. "She invited me to be an artist on this project. I applied because Ophira is an amazing person. I was excited to get the opportunity to work with her."

They began the planning stage of the exhibit in December. She and Calof visited the subjects of the exhibition (people with EDS) together. "People were enthusiastic. It was great.

"They opened up about their lives and invited us into their space."

One of the subjects featured in the exhibition is Ilana Mendelsohn, a mother of three children in their 20s. She said she is involved with Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome Canada, a national non-profit advocacy organization that supports people with EDS.

Participating in the exhibition is a way of bringing attention to the disease, Mendelsohn said.

At the show's opening people with EDS – some with walkers and others in wheelchairs – greeted each other.

Family members were also on hand to view the exhibit and schmooze. It was all very upbeat.

Much of the activity centred around Calof, who exemplifies the show's theme of not waiting.

Following the EDS diagnosis, she had to interrupt her studies in the opera performance program at the University of British Columbia. But being in a wheelchair had not stopped Calof from performing.

She has starred in a number of one-woman comedy shows. Her most recent show, *Literally Titanium*, was presented in January at the Next Stage 2020, a boutique theatre festival produced every winter by Toronto Fringe.

She also co-created the sketch comedy revue, *Generally Hospital*, which was nominated for a comedy award.

In her performance work, Calof weaves together music, comedy and storytelling, much of which centres on disability and the chronic illness experience.

She also curates and hosts the ReelAbilities Film Festival comedy program, along with consulting on accessibility across the comedy community and beyond.

Calof lives alone, but she's near an accessible subway stop. Her groceries are delivered and she has a close network of friends.

She said she has an "unconventional support structure" that enables her to live independently, and a career that keeps her engaged. "I've built a life that works for me." ■

Ophira Calof, left, worked closely with photographer Chorong Kim, right, to create the exhibit, which runs until Feb. 26 at the MNJCC. BARBARA SILVERSTEIN PHOTO

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Film about standup comic mostly falls flat

MICHAEL FRAIMAN
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Ben Schwartz and Billy Crystal PHOTO COURTESY OF UNOBSTRUCTED VIEW

Stop me if you've heard this one before.

A struggling young man, sardonic and charismatic, afraid of growing up and confused about his future, meets a wise mentor who helps him understand himself. Through various emotional confrontations, the young man ends up a little more confident about the future than before.

Sound familiar? It might be because some variation on this indie story, this millennial male self-examination with pungent undertones of sexism and little true insight to offer, seems to come out every few months. This month specifically on Feb. 21, when it opens in Toronto – it's *Standing Up, Falling Down*, the debut film by director Matt Ratner, starring the charming Jewish duo of Ben Schwartz and Billy Crystal.

Schwartz, a genuine comedic talent who has showcased impressive range as a leading man in indie projects such as *I'm a Mitzvah* and *The Earliest Show*, cruises through this story as Scott, a flailing comic who broke up with his girlfriend and left his native Long Island, N.Y., for Los Angeles four years ago. Inches from admitting defeat, he finally moves back home, where he chances upon a kooky man in a bar bathroom. The older man, Marty, is a dermatologist and unlikely Twitter comedian, played by Crystal.

Crystal is the reason to see the film. He singlehandedly props up the story with the gravitas and the thinly veiled sorrow needed to play a sad-clown bachelor whose two wives died tragic deaths. He's trying to reconnect with his adult son who never wants to see him again, so instead he flips blueberry pancakes and pours glasses of bourbon for dinner every night. When he meets Scott, he finds a placeholder for his stubborn offspring – someone about the right age, also Jewish, who actually wants to spend time with him.

Crystal hasn't enjoyed many meaty, human roles in his career, and perhaps by choosing so few of them he is doing himself a service, disappearing from the public eye until he launches himself back into the spotlight, looking like a whole different person. Marty edges toward stereotypes, but that works for Crystal, who shines in the role.

Unfortunately for the leading men, the overall film is a stereotype of the introspective indie genre. The guys laugh through their lines and go on mild, inoffensive misadventures. They drink and smoke weed. They wake up hung over. They moan about getting older.

In these sorts of films, the cinematography is always the same (handheld close-ups of lead men staring out of windows); the character is always the same (quirky and observational, confused and anxious, banking on boyish charm); the script falls into the same stereotypical pitfalls (why are so many supermodel-quality women blindly attracted to these guys? And why do they all have black best friends?).

Standing Up, Falling Down falls into many of the same problems that its predecessors have suffered, but falls harder for its particularly weak writing, prolonged scenes and confusing character choices. Neither the director nor writer Peter Hoare seems interested in anything beyond a loose character sketch. Details exist but are irrelevant. Subtext is scant. It is what it is.

As the two guys become closer, it's hard to say what the takeaways are. Scott and Marty don't really learn much from each other. After falling back into old habits with his ex, Scott, valiant man that he is, breaks things off, only to chance upon a truer version of love later on.

Marty doesn't really teach him anything, nor does he learn much – he just makes Scott laugh. The same could be said of the audience – if they laugh at all. ■

Standing Up, Falling Down opens in Toronto on Feb. 21 at the Carlton Cinema.

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Parashah

Mishpatim | Exodus 21:1-24:18

Rabbi Andrew Rosenblatt contemplates the mitzvah of lending money without interest
Rabbi Michal Shekel says physical emancipation alone does not make a person free
Rabbi Howard Morrison reflects on Judaism's fundamental lessons about tzedakah

Rabbi Andrew Rosenblatt

There are some mitzvot that are on our checklist, for which we make sure to set a plan to execute. For instance, we buy matzah for Pesach, we build a sukkah, we make sure to have a special meal on Shabbat. There are others that are situational mitzvot, which only come about should the circumstance arise. Such mitzvot would include the need to shoo away a mother bird should we come upon a bird's nest and wish to harvest the eggs.

The mitzvah of lending money without interest may seem to land more in the second category. Should someone approach you for a loan, make sure that you provide the loan interest-free. The presentation of the mitzvah in Exodus 22:24 might even lend itself to such an interpretation, as the first word of the Hebrew verse is usually translated as "if." However, the rabbis teach us that, in this instance, it should be translated as "when." We are thus commanded, "When you lend money to My people, to the poor person among you, you shall not behave toward him as a creditor. You shall not impose interest upon him."

The rabbis are giving us the imperative to place this mitzvah in the category of responsibilities you must execute. You have a responsibility to find someone to loan money to, just like finding matzah for the seder or building a sukkah or giving charity. We have to actively find those to whom we can extend free credit.

Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan, often referred to as the Chofetz Chaim, emphasized that the Torah's concept of excess capital is not what you put in your own investment account, but what you use to raise up others within your community who have not been able to climb their own way out of poverty. This is a beautiful imperative and one we should all take very seriously, either personally or through your local Hebrew free loan association. ■

Rabbi Andrew Rosenblatt is the spiritual leader of Congregation Schara Tzedeck in Vancouver.

Rabbi Michal Shekel

Shabbat Shekalim gets its name from the special *maftir* that is read, wherein each male 20 years of age and over contributes a half-shekel to the Temple. Post-Temple, the donations were used to support communal institutions in the Land of Israel. This contribution is seen as both a ransom (physical release) and an expiation (spiritual release).

Parashat Mishpatim provides the case of an indentured servant who refuses to go free after serving for seven years. While we may empathize with a man not wishing to leave his family, Rachel Adler sees it differently:

"When the debt-slave professes his love for his master,... what kind of love is this?" asks Adler in *The Torah: A Women's Commentary*. "It is a love of dependency, of not having to make decisions, of not having to struggle for a living, to choose a wife, or take responsibility for one's children."

Unwilling to accept his release, the indentured servant is brought to a door or doorpost, and his master pierces his ear with an awl, at which point he becomes a slave for life.

The slave's refusal of freedom is an affront to God. In Tractate Kiddushin, Yohanan ben Zakkai sees this individual, who heard God's voice at Sinai, as freely choosing a human master instead. Shimon ben Rabbi adds another layer of symbolism, explaining why his ear was pierced at the doorpost: In Egypt, the doorpost marked in blood witnessed God's protection of the Jewish people. Now, the door and doorpost witness this man's rejection of God's will. Meanwhile, Pinhas Peli explains that the indentured servant heard God's message of freedom but did not listen properly, thus the symbol of the pierced ear.

Physical emancipation alone does not make for a free person. The person wishing to remain enslaved is weighed down by spiritual chains. Today, we celebrate individual autonomy, but independence without direction can enslave a person in meaningless existence. Accepting obligation, as symbolized by the half-shekel, is the hallmark of true freedom. ■

Rabbi Michal Shekel is the executive director of the Toronto Board of Rabbis and spiritual leader of Har Tikvah Congregation in Brampton, Ont.

Rabbi Howard Morrison

Parashat Mishpatim coincides with Shabbat Shekalim, the first of four special Shabbatot surrounding the festivals of Purim and Pesach, the others being Zachor, Parah and ha-Hodesh.

The original mitzvah obligated the participant to give half a shekel. Over the years, this mandatory contribution has been used for different things: a means of conducting a census in biblical times, a way of financially supporting the Tabernacle in biblical times and the Jerusalem Temple in antiquity, and a reminder in advance of Purim and Pesach to enable the needy to fully celebrate these holidays.

Why only a half-shekel? A half teaches us that alone we are incomplete. Fullness is achieved when we are part of something larger than ourselves, be it partnering ourselves with a family, a community, a heritage or a history.

In this context, the Hebrew word for "half" is *machatzit*. The middle letter, *tzadi*, stands for tzedakah (justice or righteousness). Together, the word's first and last letters spell *met*, meaning death, while the letters immediately before and after the *tzadi* spell *chai*, meaning life. When one observes the mitzvah of giving tzedakah, one ensures life in many ways.

While tzedakah is operative all year round, the upcoming holidays centre on the mitzvah of giving with different terms. Based on an actual verse in the story of Esther, at Purim time, we are commanded to give *matanot le'evyonim* literally, gifts to the poor. The plural form means that one is obligated to support at least two individuals.

In preparation for Pesach, the mitzvah of giving is called *maot hittim*, literally, funds for grains, which helps poor Jews afford matzah, wine and the other requisite items in order to make a meaningful seder.

So important is the mitzvah of tzedakah that the sage Rabbi Assi taught tzedakah is analogous to all of the mitzvot.

As we approach Purim and Pesach, may we all give tzedakah to the best of our abilities to support individuals, families and the institutions of our community. ■

Rabbi Howard Morrison is senior rabbi – mara d'atra at Beth EmethBais Yehuda Synagogue in Toronto.

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TORONTO

The Jerusalem Foundation of Canada and the Jerusalem College of Technology collaborated to raise awareness and funds for scholarships to assist young men and women from Jerusalem's haredi community. The college has a longstanding relationship with the Jerusalem Foundation which administers its scholarship program for haredi students in Jerusalem. Funds will be used to support beneficiaries to enter relevant academic programs that will provide opportunities to earn a degree and qualify for employment in areas such as high-tech, nursing and business management. ■

David Lyons and Lewis Mitz, president Jerusalem Foundation of Canada

Leba Grauer, Elisheva Reichmann and Chani Reichmann

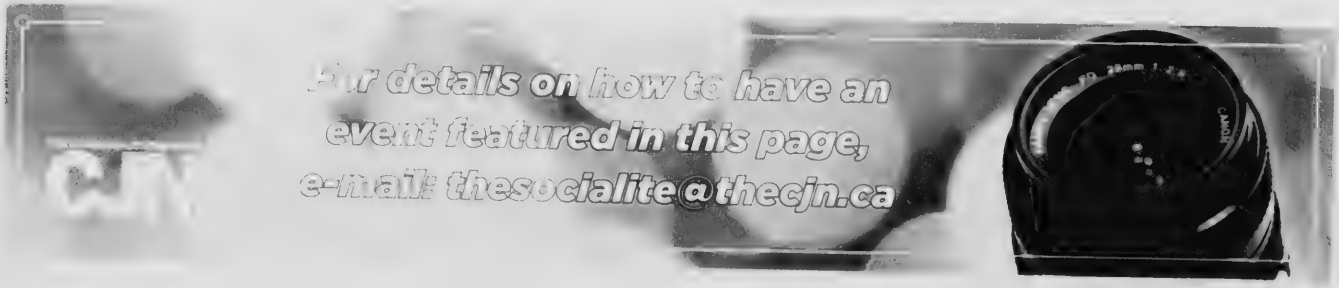
Simmy Zieleniec, CEO, Jerusalem College Of Technology Jerry Klasner and Henry Zieleniec

Gabi Wesifeld and Shai Doron, president Jerusalem Foundation

JFC & JCT board members and staff: Back row: Simmy Zieleniec, Sarah Krauss, Julia Koschitzky, Nomi Yeshua, Joel Reitman, Lewis Mitz, Jerry Klasner and Robert Reichmann. Front row: Esty Edell, Robin Gofine and Deputy Mayor Yisrael Kellerman

KATAN PHOTOGRAPHY

Mendel Fishman



What's New

FEB. 20 – 27

by Lila Sarick

Thursday, Feb. 20

BIBLICAL CREATION
Prof. Carl Ehrlich discusses "Biblical Myths of Creation," 7:30 p.m., Holy Blossom Temple. $10 for non-members. Register at holyblossom.org

THE ESTHER SCROLL
Seymour Epstein offers a "radically new interpretation" of the Book of Esther. 7:30 p.m., Beth David.

Friday, Feb. 21

MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES
Prof. Jodi Magness discusses the excavations at Huqoq, an ancient Jewish village in Israel's Galilee, 6 p.m., Eaton Theatre, Royal Ontario Museum. RSVP at rom.on.ca/en/whats-on/roman-mosaics.

Saturday, Feb. 22

FUTURE OF DAY SCHOOL
Seth Goldsweig, vice-principal of the Leo Baeck Day School, discusses "The Future of Jewish Day School Education," after kiddush, Beth Tikvah.

WATER HAVDALAH
Enjoy a bubble show and dinner at Temple Sinai's Young Families Whimsical Water Havdalah, 4:30 p.m., $20 per family. RSVP by Feb. 20 at templesinai.net.

STRAIGHT ON TILL MORNING
A new family musical about mental health, suitable for children aged nine and up. A program will also be offered for younger children. Program includes dinner and Havdalah. Temple Emanu-El, 5 p.m. $10/$15. Details: templeemanuel.ca.

TRIVIA NIGHT
BEBY Boomers hold a trivia night, Beth Emeth, 8 p.m. $25. Register at 416-633-3838 or at beby.org.

Deadline:
The deadline for the March 5 paper is Feb. 24.
All deadlines are at noon.
Phone: 416-391-1836 ext. 269; email:
whatsnewcjn@gmail.com.

We are the champions!

Students from the Miriam Robbins Chabad Hebrew School competed in the JewQ regional championship this month. The educational game show featured 63 students from nine Toronto area Hebrew schools competing for prizes, which include a Shabbaton and final competition in New York.

YIDDISH THEATRE SHABBAT
Yiddish theatre melodies are incorporated into the service of the Song Shul, led by **Cantor Simon Spiro** and the Toronto Festival Singers, 9 a.m., Bialik Hebrew Day School, 2760 Bathurst St. Info: songshul.com.

Sunday, Feb. 23

FAMILY COOKING SERIES
Beth Tikvah hosts a three-part cooking series, 3:30-5:30 p.m. Today, how to make sushi and dumplings. $45 for the series, or $18 per class. RSVP: 416-221-3433.

YIDDISH LITERATURE LECTURE
Prof. Marc Kaplan discusses "A Disenchanted Elijah: Conspiracy, Allegory and the Crisis of Eastern European Jewry in S. Ansky's *Destruction of Galicia*," 2 p.m., Lipa Green Centre, 4600 Bathurst St. Lecture in English. Free. Details at 416-635-2883 ext. 5189.

LEARN ABOUT CLASSICAL MUSIC
Classical DJ **Howard Mednick** discusses the early days of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, second in a three-part series, at Congregation Darchei Noam, 7 p.m. $15. Tickets at: darcheinoam.ca

STEM PROGRAM
Learn about electricity and circuits, and build a glow-in-the-dark wand, for students in grades 1 to 6, 1 p.m., Chabad of Markham. $15. Register at chabadmarkham.org/stem.

CLUB CHAVERUT
Michael Kinkis and **Anna** perform "An Afternoon of Glorious Song," 1:15 p.m., Beth David. $8/$12. RSVP: **Sandy Stern**, 416-661-5191.

UP FROM THE PAGE
Enjoy an afternoon of Yiddish stories, poetry and dramatic monologues, 2 p.m., Beth Tikvah. Free for members of Friends of Yiddish, $8 for guests. RSVP: **Lillian**, 416-783-3603 or yiddish18@yahoo.ca.

WIRED FOR LOVE
Psychotherapist **Larry Borins** and **Rabbi Jarrod Grover** discuss the tools needed to build a stronger and healthier marriage, 6 p.m., Beth Tikvah. $10 per couple. For couples under 45 years old. RSVP: 416-221-3433.

BETH DAVID SINGLES
Beth David Singles (ages 50-69) visit the Royal Ontario Museum, 1:30 p.m. Meet at the cloak room. $20. RSVP: bethdavidsinglesboomeredition@gmail.com or 416-633-5500 ext. 52.

Monday, Feb. 24

MITZVAH KNITTERS
Mitzvah knitters meet at Beth Tikvah, 1-3 p.m. Details: mitzvahknitters@gmail.com.

MONDAY MORNING LEARNING
Rabbi Jarrod Grover discusses "Is Judaism Tennis or Rowing?" 9:45 a.m., Mondays until March 30, Beth Tikvah.

Tuesday, Feb. 25

TUESDAY STUDY GROUPS
Jory Vernon is the speaker at a Women of Adath study group breakfast at 9:30 a.m. $10 for non-members. Info: **Marjorie**, 416-780-9156.
Rabbi Becca Walker discusses "Gender Identity," Beth David, 10:30 a.m.

TUESDAYS WITH LARRY
Beth Tikvah shows the film *Black Honey: The Life and Poetry of Avraham Sutzkever*, 1:30 p.m., $5.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Each film includes an introduction and commentary by **Larry Anklewicz**.

WINTER WELLNESS WORKSHOP
Learn about caring for an elderly parent through a Jewish lens, with **Rabbi Robin Fryer Bodzin,** 7:30 p.m., Beth Tzedec

Wednesday, Feb. 26

JEWISH SPIRITUALITY SEMINAR
Rabbi Michael Skobac discusses "Seeking God: Faith and Doubt," 7:30 p.m., Village Shul. Free. RSVP 416-789-0020, or carol@jewsforjudaism.org

MIDTOWN LATER LEARNING
Rena Nickerson, general manager of SodaStream Canada, is the guest speaker at Congregation Habonim. 2-4 p.m.

SHEBA MEDICAL CENTER FUNDRAISER
Canadian Friends of Sheba Medical Center present the one-man play *Do I Win or Do I Lose*, 7 p.m., Meridian Arts Centre, 5040 Yonge St. The show is a fundraiser for pancreatic cancer research. Tickets available through Ticketmaster.

Thursday, Feb. 27

SCIENCE MEETS THE BIBLE
Stephen Kraft discusses "The Akedah Code," Beth David, 7:30 p.m.

LESSONS FROM AN IDF SOLDIER
Izzy Ezagui, the first soldier to lose a limb in combat and return to the battlefield, speaks at 7:30 p.m., Adath Israel Congregation. Free for students. $25 for others. For tickets, visit eventbrite.ca.

Et Cetera

CANCER SUPPORT
Cancer support for Jewish women, including social programs, educational events and resources can be found at the L'Chaim Cancer Support Group for Jewish Women. Info: 416-630-0203, or lchaim@ncjwctoronto.org.

RESA'S PIECES
Resa's Pieces string ensemble is welcoming new members in all sections, violin, viola, cello and bass. Details: resaspieces.org.

For Seniors

- **Bernard Betel Centre**, 416-225-2112. Feb. 20, wellness lecture on "Elder Abuse," 1:30 p.m., free.
- **Holy Blossom**. Feb. 24, Shinshiniyot **Maayan Gean** and **Lior Cohen** speak. Program includes exercise and lunch, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., $3/$5.
- **Association of Jewish Seniors. Rabbi Michael Skobac** discusses "I Was a Jewish Anti-Semite," Feb. 20, breakfast at 9:30 a.m., Shaarei Shomayim. $3 for non-members. Details: **Rozlin Laber**, 647-340-7961
- **Earl Bales Seniors Club.** Contact **Valerie**, 416-395-7881

Prosserman JCC

Donald Gales Family Pavilion on the Sherman Campus, 4588 Bathurst St., 416-638-1881 ext. 4020; prossermanjcc.com

- Sign up for the Birthright JCC Fitness Experience for people 21-26, at israelforfree.com
- Beginner mah-jong starts March 11, 10 a.m., bridge for beginners and intermediates starts March 26, 10 a.m. Learn to play canasta, starts March 12, 1:15 p.m.
- Film appreciation with **Shlomo Schwartzberg,** "Cinema's Female Creators," Wednesdays, Feb. 19-March 4, 1-3 p.m.

Miles Nadal JCC

750 Spadina Ave., 416-924-6211, mnjcc.org

- Toronto Jewish Film Society presents *The Rape of Europa*, with guest speaker **Bernice Eisenstein**, Feb. 23, 3 p.m., Hot Docs Cinema, 506 Bloor St. W. Tickets at eventbrite.ca. $12.50.
- Bust a Move Dance Party, Feb. 22, 5 p.m. for people 16-30 with developmental disabilities or ASD. $10.
- Access-First Musical Theatre, Mondays starting Feb. 24. Musical theatre program for people 18-30 with developmental disabilities or ASD. Details: graces@mnjcc.org
- MNJCC sing-along, no conductor, no sheet music, guitar accompanist **Nathan Hiltz,** March 11, 1 p.m.
- Strength of Self, alternating Mondays, 11 a.m. A program for women who have experienced abuse. Call ext. 147.
- Shabbat Song Circle, Fridays at 10:30 a.m., for children up to age four with an adult. Ext. 390.
- *We're Not Waiting*, photos of people with Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome, in the Gallery at the J until Feb. 26; *When I Walk Among Trees*, photos by **Theresa Bryson** on the third floor until March 1.
- **Seniors Arts and Culture**, ext. 155, lisar@mnjcc.org. **Rivka Campbell** discusses "Jews of Colour and the Jews of Jamaica," Feb. 20, 1 p.m. $5; Celebrate Shabbat in Song with **Isaac Muzikansky** and **Alexander Veprinsky**, Feb. 28, lunch at 12:30 p.m., ceremony at 1 p.m. Free. Register at ext. 0
- **Seniors Fitness**, ext. 521. Start Here, a free community wellness integration program designed to provide peer support, community engagement and learning and recovery opportunities. Agency referral required. Call ext. 574
- Michael Bernstein Chapel holds services Thursdays at 7:15 a.m. and Sundays at 8 a.m. Info: **Coleman**, 416-968-0200

Schwartz/Reisman Centre

Joseph and Wolf Lebovic JCC, 9600 Bathurst St., 905-303-1821. Contact **Andrea** for info: andrea@srcentre.ca, or ext. 3006

- **Barry Schwartz** discusses "Invest Well and Retire Better," March 5, 7 p.m.
- Mah-jong for beginners starts March 10, 1 p.m. Canasta starts March 12, 10 a.m.
- LGBTQ and Family Purim Shabbat dinner, March 6, 6:45-9 p.m.
- Day trips to the theatre: April 22, *Chicago* at Stratford Festival; May 7, *Gypsy* at Shaw Festival.
- Recreational programs for children, teens and young adults with autism spectrum disorder, contact karina@srcentre.ca, or ext. 3042.

Jewish Family & Child

Groups are open to all members of the community. A sliding scale is offered for those who need fee reductions. Registration required. Call **Shawna Sidney**, 416-638-7800 ext. 6215, or visit jfandcs.com groups

- Living With Teens: A six-session group for parents of teens. Topics include: setting appropriate limits, learning to let go, parents' rights and responsibilities, the pressures of drugs, alcohol, dating and sexuality. Starts Feb. 24, 7:30-9 p.m., 9600 Bathurst St.
- Parenting the Child/Teen With ADHD: A four-week group for parents with children/teens diagnosed with ADHD. Starts Feb. 25, 7-9 p.m., 9600 Bathurst St.
- The Challenge of Anger for Women. A six-session group for women wanting to learn how to express their anger in an assertive, non-aggressive way. Starts Feb. 25, 7:30-9 p.m., 4600 Bathurst St. ■

AUTHORS & POETS

THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
CJN

Annual Passover Literary Supplement

We invite readers to submit unpublished, original short stories or poetry that explore Jewish themes.

They should not exceed 2,000 words. Selected submissions will appear in the Passover Supplement of The CJN on April 2, 2020. Not all submissions can be published, and not all those selected will appear in both Toronto and Montreal editions. We look for originality. Please don't send more than three entries.

We cannot correspond with contributors.

Deadline for submissions is Feb. 28, 2020 at noon

E-mail submissions to:

cjnliterarysupplement@gmail.com

We can only accept email submissions. We prefer Word documents.

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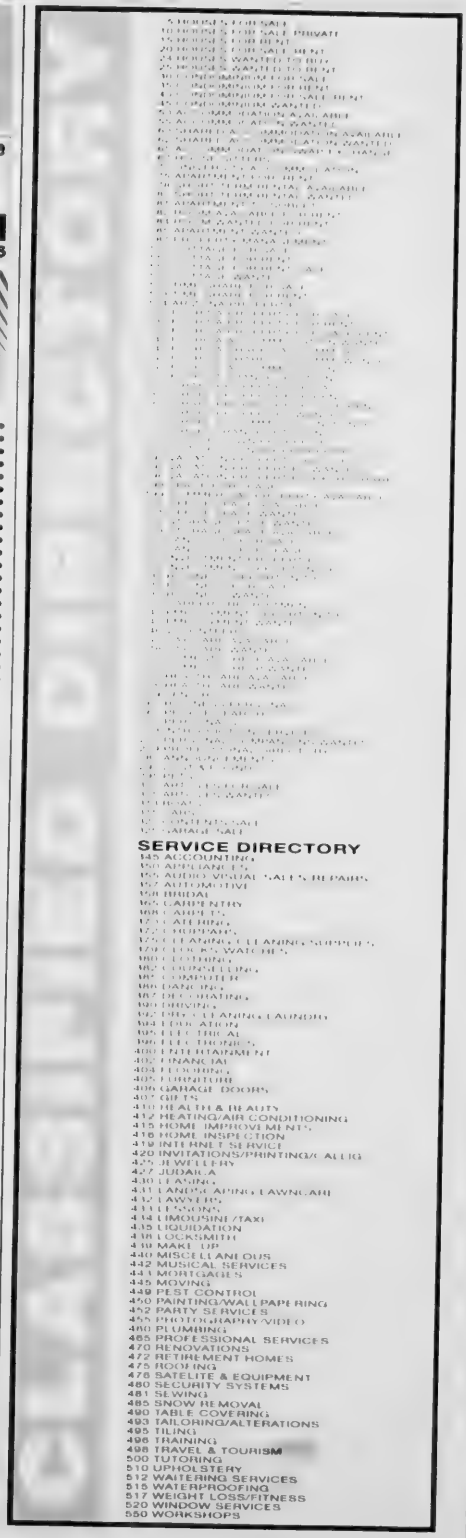

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Peter Beinart: Analyzing Israeli-Diaspora relations

ALEX ROSE
arose@thecjn.ca

Peter Beinart writes for *The Atlantic* and the *Forward* and is a professor of journalism at City University of New York. He was in Toronto late last year for a JSpace Canada conference.

What do you think are some of the biggest issues facing the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora?

The Diaspora itself is pretty diverse, so I'm not sure that one can generalize about all Diaspora communities. I think with North American Jewry, specifically in the United States, one difference is that in Israel, Judaism as a practice is basically overwhelmingly Orthodox, and so non-Orthodox Jewry doesn't necessarily have a lot of respect and status in Israel, so that's one source of division.

I think another is that younger American Jews, outside of the Orthodox community, are highly universalistic, which means that if they're focused on what's happening in Israel, they're likely to chafe at Israel's policies towards Palestinians. They're more suspicious of a nationalistic narrative and less inclined to be willing to sacrifice notions of liberal democracy because of tribalistic or particularist justifications.

Do you think there's a way to balance those two worldviews?

I think that Zionism and liberal democracy are naturally in tension, in the sense that liberal democracy suggests equality under the law and political Zionism calls for a country that has a particular responsibility to the Jewish people, even though inside the Green Line a lot of the citizens of Israel, 20 per cent, are not Jews. I think inside the Green Line, it's possible to find a reasonable tension between those two imperatives, because at least you have a foundation that Palestinian citizens of Israel are citizens of the country and live under the same laws and can vote. And I think Israel could move towards a more inclusive identity for them.

I think in the West Bank, where Israel holds millions of Palestinians who can't vote, it breaks that tension. Because when you're controlling millions of people who cannot become citizens of the country in which they live, and who live under a different set of laws and do not vote, then the tension I think snaps, because you have no liberal democracy at all. So I think the great threat to that balance is Israel's control of the West Bank and Gaza.

So in your opinion, what's a North American Jew to do?

Well, North American Jewry has lots of its own internal problems, which are not connected to Israel – problems of Jewish illiteracy above all, I would say. In terms of Israel, I think that our obligation is to be connected, is to love Israel in an honest way and to struggle with Israel. Israel means struggle, it doesn't mean blind obedience. It means struggle.

Our traditions talk about a kind of loving struggle. First of all, the loving struggle has to be based on honesty, it has to be based on an honest appraisal of what's happening in Israel. And you can't have an honest appraisal if you don't engage with the 50 per cent of the people under Israeli control who are Palestinians. So it starts with engagement with Palestinians, because you can't understand Israel without understanding Palestinians.

And then I think I would want American Jews to do vis a vis Israel the same things they do vis a vis the United States or Canada, which is, if you believe in the founding documents of those countries, the Israeli Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, you want to struggle for those principles, even if it puts you in opposition to the government of the moment.

Peter Beinart

Have you heard the idea that the older generation of North American Jews failed the younger generation by not properly teaching them about Israel? If so, do you agree?

Yeah, I mean, I've heard that in different ways. I think a lot of the education in the American Jewish community about Israel is not education so much as it's propaganda. Education means basically giving people a multiplicity of perspectives, allowing them to come to their own perspectives and not avoiding hard and painful facts and realities.

To me, Israel education that does not involve reading Palestinian authors is not Israel education at all. You cannot understand the Israeli story without hearing from Palestinians about how they have experienced it. That doesn't mean they only hear from Palestinians, but they have to be part of the educational process. And oftentimes, in the American Jewish community, they're not.

What do you think the millennial generation would look like in terms of attitudes towards Israel if they'd had a more comprehensive, honest education about Israel?

Assimilation and lack of Jewish literacy would probably have led to some of the disengagement we're seeing anyway. A lot of the disengagement is not because of Israel's policies or Israel education, it's simply because younger Jews are less connected to anything Jewish, and Israel is a Jewish thing. But I do think, first of all, that younger Jews would have a greater degree of respect for their own leadership if they felt like their leadership had been honest, just like children won't respect their parents when their parents are not honest with them. The same thing happens at the communal level.

And secondly, what I think you would have would be a larger cohort of people who were equipped to wrestle with Israel, struggle with Israel and engage in an honest, informed and meaningful way, whereas I think now what you find is some young Jews try to do that themselves later on in life, but they were not given the tools.

And I also think young American Jews would be less afraid, would find their interactions on college campuses less frightening, if they had some of these conversations and had been exposed to some of these materials and realities before they got to college; if they had heard them in their own community. They would be more able to argue these points if they had been exposed early on to the Palestinian experience. ■

This interview has been edited and condensed for style and clarity

Sonny Goldstein, CFP
President

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The poor had to sacrifice everything for education

PAUL SOCKEN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

There is the talmudic story about the legendary Rabbi Hillel. He was desperately poor but dedicated to his studies, earning just enough to care for his family and to pay to enter the house of study.

One day, he lacked the sum to pay the guard at the study house and was denied entry. The Talmud recounts: "He climbed up and sat upon the aperture in the roof so that he could hear the words of the living God. It was winter season and snow fell upon him. When dawn broke, the rabbis looked up and saw the figure of a man in the aperture. They went up and found him covered in snow. They extracted him and washed him and sat him next to the fire."

This is ostensibly a story about a rabbi's dedication to Torah study, but the eminent scholar Jeffrey Rubenstein suggests that the real question is: why was there was a guard collecting money at the entrance to the academy? Was education reserved only for the well to do or an elite group? Rubenstein sees the story as a critique of the lack of access to education. It took a near death for the Sages to see what they had not seen before: the tragic fact that the impoverished had to sacrifice everything for their studies.

The story constitutes a challenge to reconsider who has access to education. After all, not everyone is as dedicated and resourceful as Hillel – and even he almost lost his life trying to pursue his thirst for knowledge. One wonders about the others, whose entry was barred due to a lack of funds, and who walked away and never returned.

There is a short statement in another section of the Talmud that sheds light on this issue: "Yehoshua ben Gamla instituted an ordinance that teachers of children should be established in each and every province and in each and every town, and they would bring the children to learn at the age of six and at the age of seven. This system was established for the masses."

This declaration ensured universal education for Jewish children of all backgrounds and economic levels, and may very well stand as the first universal education system in history.

Of course, "universal" education in those days meant education for boys. In the 20th century, in response to the crisis of young women turning away from Orthodoxy in eastern Europe, Sarah Schenirer established the Bais Yaakov school for girls. Before the Second World War, about 38,000 girls in 200 schools were enrolled. After the war, Bais Yaakov took root in North America and Israel and continues to educate thousands of girls to this day. Schenirer, herself with little formal education of any kind, left her mark on the history of Jewish education.

Education has been a priority of the Jewish people for millenniums. The Jewish emphasis on learning of all kinds, religious and secular, has led the Jews to earn an extraordinary number of Nobel Prizes (22.5 per cent of all Nobel Prizes for a group that comprises 0.2 per cent of the world's population).

Today's Jewish day school system is the next incarnation of this long tradition of emphasizing education. These schools are an essential bulwark against ignorance of Jewish history, culture and religion, especially in a secular, multicultural society. While the cost, in hard-earned dollars, has become almost impossible for most families, the cost of neglecting this vital institution is far higher for the Jewish future.

If Hillel was willing to freeze on a roof top lest he miss a class, can we afford to be the generation that posts a guard at the door of the academy? If an uneducated woman, centuries later, had the vision and foresight to create a way to enlighten countless girls, dare we fail our generation? ■

Dr. Paul Socken is distinguished professor emeritus and founder of the Jewish studies program at the University of Waterloo.

Dear Rabby

Quick answers to speedy dating questions

Rabbi Yisroel Bernath

Every day, I receive so many questions it's hard to give a detailed answer for all of them. For a little change of pace, here is a set of rapid-fire questions and answers from my inbox.

Dear Rabbi Bernath,
Someone offered to introduce me to a guy and we both agreed to go out. I know he was given my number at least three weeks ago, but I haven't heard from him. How should I handle this?

Awkward

Dear Awkward,
Someone you haven't met is immaterial to you. You have no relationship yet. The real aggrieved party is the person who put some of their reputation on the line to set you up, and if the guy is standing both of you up, this person needs to know, and they need to deal with it.

Dear Rabbi Bernath,
I went out on a date with someone I met through a dating website. On the date, I felt very uncomfortable with how he looked at me and with some of the comments he made (there were a lot of innuendos). I don't plan on going out with him again. Do I report him to the site? I don't want to ruin his chances of meeting someone, but I felt his behaviour was inappropriate.

Uncomfortable

Dear Uncomfortable,
The only thing hurting his chances of meeting someone is his behaviour, and people won't change unless they get some sort of feedback. Sometimes being "nice" is not being nice at all. Assuming the dating website is more serious than Tinder, stand up for yourself and your fellow females and say something. That will also help him move forward with his life and grow up.

Dear Rabbi Bernath,
I went on a shidduch date with a girl who was visiting from overseas. I enjoyed meeting her and she seemed nice, but I'm not sure if I want to get into a relationship with someone from another country – it seems like it would be hard to form a relationship. However, I haven't met anyone locally that I felt a connection with. I'm 50 years old. What advice can you give me?

Uncertain

Dear Uncertain,
This is something you're supposed to think about before you go out. Anyways, if you're 50, then you need to decide what's important in your life. Are you playing the perfectionism game, avoiding a relationship by always finding a fault? It's a stalling tactic. If your life allows you to move, then make your move. If it doesn't, then don't. But if you do, rest assured, many beautiful relationships were built over long distances.

Dear Rabbi Bernath,
I went on what I thought was a nice date. She said she enjoyed it, too. But since then, I've been trying to text her, and she hasn't responded. I must have sent her 15 messages in the last week, but haven't gotten any response. How do I get her to answer me?

Frustrated

Dear Frustrated,
You don't. Fifteen texts… wow. Just stop. People say things to be polite sometimes. Your overeagerness may have caused her to lie in the first place – she didn't want to burst your bubble in your face. And asking "How do I get her…" tells me you should stop dating and get some social skills training. You clearly don't understand relationships.

Dear Rabbi Bernath,
I am putting up a profile on an online dating site. Someone told me I need to get formal pictures from a photo shoot. What if the formal pictures don't represent the real me? Isn't it better to be me?

Photoshopped

Dear Photoshopped,
I don't know what "formal" means here. Like, you're going to wear a gown? Get a good photographer, wear clothes you like and go somewhere you feel comfortable. Take lots of pictures and find a shot that shows the real you.

Dear Rabbi Bernath,
I have agreed to go out with someone, but I haven't heard from him yet, and now someone else is looking to set me up with someone else. Should I accept both setups?

Doubled Over

Dear Doubled Over,
Let the first person know that you're being pursued, so you'd like to know when you'll hear back. Then let the second person know the situation. One at a time, I say. ■

Have a question for Rabbi Bernath? Email him at rabbi@jewishndg.com

OBITUARIES AND RELATED NOTICES

STEELES MEMORIAL CHAPEL

Silver, Harvey	January 28, 2020	1717 Avenue Rd
Adler, Imre	January 28, 2020	Private
Rabinovitch, Shirley	January 28, 2020	56 Gayla St
Stone, Bertha Raye	January 28, 2020	Private
Michaels, Helen Thelma	January 29, 2020	Private
Iskov, Frances	January 29, 2020	65 Spring Garden Ave
Elkaim, Isaac	January 29, 2020	138 Homestead Rd
Golod, Mira	January 30, 2020	Private
Jabotinsky, Vitaly Boris	February 1, 2020	Private
Simai, Judit	February 1, 2020	38 Sandale Gardens
Durbach, Sloum	February 2, 2020	4005 Bayview Ave
Schupack, Balla	February 2, 2020	37 Avenal Dr
Applebaum, Max	February 4, 2020	28 Alexis Rd
Samuel, Elisabeth Zahava	February 5, 2020	121 McAllister Rd
Lewkowicz, Matylda	February 6, 2020	41 Michelle Dr
Chastny, Maria	February 7, 2020	46 Turner Dr
Forman, Paul David	February 7, 2020	27 Shenstone Rd
Korets, Raissa	February 8, 2020	Private

BENJAMIN'S PARK MEMORIAL CHAPEL

Larry Gross	Jan 31/20	357423 Meaford Townline
Harold Lewin	Jan 31/20	5351 Yonge Street
Lorna Stein	Feb 1/20	2121 Bathurst Street
John Berrys	Feb 1/20	65 Spring Garden Avenue
Annette Hoffman	Feb 3/20	3560 Bathurst Street
Nathan Sussman	Feb 3/20	2075 Bayview Avenue
Esther Litz	Feb 5/20	24 Earling Drive
Russell Lazarus	Feb 4/20	504 Highcliffe Drive
Diane Cristall	Feb 5/20	80 Colin Avenue
Alex Siegel	Feb 9/20	355 St. Clair Ave. West
Lola Caplan	Feb 9/20	63 Strathearn Road
Shulamit Vaskevitch	Feb 9/20	147 Elder Street
Michael Shapiro	Feb 10/20	400 Walmer Road
Stan Swartzman	Feb 8/20	24 Swansdown Drive
Lilian Gordon	Feb 9/20	74 Poinsetta Drive
Betty Wolfman	Feb 10/20	355 St. Clair Ave. West
Tillie Bardikoff	Feb 10/20	3560 Bathurst Street
Edward Brandt	Feb 11/20	12 Sir Modesto Court
Rose Silverberg	Feb 10/20	79 Palm Drive

HEBREW BASIC BURIAL

Marilyne (Herson) Berman	Feb 10/20	15 North Park Drive

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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS

CJN

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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS

CJN

Switching into Jewish school system not such a leap

SHERI SHEFA
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

When we talk about Jewish students starting at a new school mid-way through primary or high school, they're often switching from Jewish day school to public school. But how do Jewish day schools accommodate students who choose to dive headfirst into a dual curriculum after starting their education in the non-Jewish school system?

Students making the transition from public school to a private institution is not as rare as some might think, said Ora Shulman, Associated Hebrew School's head of school.

"We receive a few requests of this type each year," she said. "Various reasons have been cited – these include social concerns, as well as the feeling that something is missing in terms of Jewish education."

Jaime Ber is a former Toronto French School student who enrolled a few years ago in TanenbaumCHAT's new stream in Grade 9.

"I always knew I wanted to leave Toronto French School. It was not a good environment for me personally and I was always interested in learning about my Jewish identity and how to further my Jewish knowledge," said the 18-year-old Grade 12 student.

Sadly, her interest in exploring her Jewish identity wasn't the only reason she opted to switch to a Jewish school.

"I did go through some anti-Semitic experiences ... that were not handled properly by the school whatsoever," Ber said.

"People were throwing coins at me, saying 'Pick it up, you're a Jew.'"

She said in science class, if they were working with gas, students would make references to the Holocaust.

Ber said the school had promised to reach out to Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies to come into the school to teach students about the Holocaust and do some programming in honour of Holocaust Remembrance Day, but it didn't happen.

And so, in spite of the academic challenge of coming from a school where she was accustomed to learning in French rather than English, having to learn Hebrew from scratch, and coping with a heavier course load, Ber decided that joining the new stream at CHAT was the way to go.

She explained that the program is designed specifically for students who didn't attend Jewish day school previously, and who don't have a good command of the Hebrew language.

"New stream students are separate. We have our own classes.... Everything is taught in English and at a slower pace," she said, adding that they are taught how to read, write and speak Hebrew in the Ivrit (Hebrew) course. "They started us from Alef Bet."

Ber said that adding four more courses to her work load was challenging, "but they really do help you and take the time to help you succeed.... The teachers want you to succeed and they offer their time."

All in all, Ber said the challenges associated with moving to CHAT were more social than academic. "When you surround yourself with Jewish people, you might feel more at home, but it's a different group and environment than I was used to ... but I overcame that."

Shulman said her primary school also has strategies in place to help newcomers acclimatize both socially and academically.

Kathy Friedman, Bialik's Jewish studies director. PHOTO COURTESY OF BIALIK

> *I was always interested in learning about my Jewish identity and how to further my Jewish knowledge*

"We have an intake process for all new incoming students that includes an in-person meeting and assessment of academic skills, as well as understanding the student's social, emotional and behavioural needs," Shulman said.

"The matter of Hebrew language skills is relatively simple to accommodate for if everything else does not raise concern. Schools now have many entry points, and the school can provide learning experiences that are tailored to different learners, including students who can't yet read Hebrew at the level of their peers."

Kathy Friedman, director of Jewish studies at Bialik Hebrew Day School, said her school expects new students to have varying degrees of Hebrew fluency.

"Based on their needs, grade level, etc., we will develop an appropriate, individualized program that will work for them," she said, adding that the staff also works to help new students adjust to a new environment, new friends and new academic expectations.

"To help new students integrate, Bialik has supports in place, including a buddy system, mentor families and regular check-ins. Interviews prior to entry allow us to determine a student's interests and strengths, which helps us integrate them into different aspects of the school, such as clubs, sports and leadership."

Shulman said that incoming students to Associated are also matched up with one of their peers before they begin classes. "We make sure the child has a recess buddy when they start off, and keep in touch frequently at the beginning of their time here."

"We make sure to keep on top of students' progress and to guide them so they can be successful," Friedman said. ■

ADVERTORIAL

The Secret Sauce to Reaching Today's Teens

By Rabbi Glenn Black, CEO of NCSY Canada and Torah High

Teens care about their futures, have passions, dreams, and goals to pursue just as we did when we ourselves were young. While they often get a bad rap, the truth is that teens of today care a great deal about the world around them and want to have a positive and meaningful impact. They want to control their own destinies and determine for themselves their own Jewish journeys.

It is during these fragile, upending, and critical stage of their lives—the teenage years—that we at NCSY can have the most important impact. That is because it is precisely during this stage of life when teens are discovering themselves and shaping ideas with regard to a host of decisions that will impact the trajectory of their lives forever: Who will their friends, confidants and mentors be? Who will they want to marry? What values will they want instill in their children?

With the fast pace of modernity and the shifting landscape of ideas that teens are exposed to, NCSY must evolve as well. That is why all our programs involve leaders and advisors that speak the language that teens relate to, allowing our teens to share their lives with openness and trust.

The vast majority of teens choose to become involved in NCSY—that is astonishing when you think about it. In earlier times, religious and spiritual life was dictated predominantly by parents and the synagogue. Today's teens are choosing which organizations and groups they want to be a part of. In many respects, NCSY has replaced institutional life when it comes to engaging teens with programs that enrich their Jewish identities. Teens see NCSY as a safe and non-threatening mechanism for exploring how to live and express themselves Jewishly and determine what level of intensity that engagement looks like.

6 MULTI-LEVEL PROGRAMS REACH TEENS WHERE THEY ARE

NCSY Canada has programs for every level of Jewish engagement. In that way, we are able to reach teens where they are. From JSU and shabbatons to learning groups and trips to Israel, there is something for every Jewish teen to explore that aligns with their own comfort level of Jewish engagement.

TORAH HIGH

Teens want to learn more about Judaism in ways that are accessible and holistic—a Jewish education that allows them the freedom to ask questions freely. To that end, we offer Torah High, an after-school, supplementary school program that offers teens a wide array of accredited courses in both Jewish and general studies to choose from to supplement their public school education.

ISRAEL

With today's politically charged climate and debates around Israel, teens today are exposed to a wealth of information about what is going on in Israel and the Middle East. It is important that teens experience the reality of Israel first hand—away from the debates and controversies that are stirred up on social media. NCSY runs over 26 summer programs, 21 of which are in Israel. TJJ (The Jerusalem Journey) is NCSY's flagship Israel program where teens explore the land through excursions from the Golan Heights to the shores of Eilat and everywhere in between, make profound friendships, and experience the spiritual essence and ancient roots of Israel.

JEWISH STUDENT UNION

For social engagement and an introduction to Judaism, we offer JSU (Jewish student union clubs) that brings holiday programs and open discussions to teens' home schools. There are currently more than 30 Jewish student clubs across Canada that reach approximately 1500 teens. This is a testament to how teens today feel it is important to connect to their heritage, even as they are immersed in modern life.

SHABBATONS / WEEKEND CONVENTIONS

For those who want a more immersive experience, we offer shabbatons, getaways, and conventions, where teens enjoy a Shabbat experience that includes song, words of inspiration, connection with other teens and mentors, and local sightseeing.

LEARN AND EARN

For those teens who want to study Jewish ideas and source texts, we offer Learn and Earn, a weekly study program that allows teens to choose which topic to explore. Participants received a small stipend as an incentive and token reward for the learning that they do.

LIVE2GIVE / CHESED PROGRAMS

Teens have a unique desire to make a difference in the world. They no longer want to lead a life whose value is determined solely through acquisition and material success. Our teens relate to the Jewish value of tikkun olam and social justice. That is why we offer programs, such as Live2Give, where teens engage in activities that help the less fortunate in local and international destinations.

THE SECRET SAUCE OF NCSY

Our programs are the vehicles—but our objective is to engage with the essence of our teens in order to understand them, build them up and uplift them. Our teens choose NCSY because there is no judgement there; there are no preconceived ideas about who they are and no pressure as to where we want them to go. What we want at NCSY is simple. We want our teens to become the best versions of themselves by building connections to their Jewish heritage that is authentic, personally relevant, and joyous.

For more information about NCSY and/or Torah High, call 905.761.6273 or visit www.ncsy.ca and/or www.torahhigh.org

Teaching financial literacy to kids

ILANA BELFER
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Last year, 12-year-old Lila Singer thought she wanted to be a chef when she grew up. Now, after budgeting for a fictional character from birth to retirement, she's not so sure.

"I was really into baking," she said. "So actually our character in our group was a chef and ... we ended up losing because he didn't have enough money or whatever so I'm like, 'Oh, probably not the best idea.'"

Singer is a student at The Leo Baeck Day School in Toronto which since 2017, has taught its Grades 5 and 6 students about "financial literacy" - a fancy title for knowing how to manage money in your life. They cover topics including debt, credit, budgets, bank accounts and mortgages using interactive games and workshops offered by an organization called Extra Ed.

Activities like the "Net Worth Tournament" or "How Much Do I Cost?" get students thinking about the cost of their education, hobbies, clothes, food and utilities to the point where they go home and tell their parents, "Wow! I have some empathy for you," said Singer's mom, Iris Glaser, who is also Leo Baeck's director of marketing and communications.

Extra Ed is just one example of numerous supplementary education providers popping up across Canada that either work with schools directly or run after-school programs and camps centred around financial literacy - a subject that has made headlines over the past few years, as governments re-evaluate its place in curriculums.

In September, for instance, Ontario introduced financial literacy as a ministry-mandated focus of Grade 10 Career Studies. In December, Alberta's Curriculum Advisory Panel released a report highlighting financial literacy as a key area needing improvement. And 2019-2020 marks the final phase of a four-year transitional period to modernize British Columbia's curriculum, which now features explicit financial literacy components at every grade level.

This has raised questions about how financial literacy is being taught in schools - both public and independent - and whether it's enough.

Young entrepreneurs made over $500 selling "Hanukkah in a Jar." EXPLORER HOP PHOTO

> *"I just thought financial literacy was this gaping hole in the education we're providing to our kids."*

Leo Baeck isn't the only Jewish day school in the Greater Toronto Area to partner with Extra Ed. In fact, Extra Ed's program was piloted at Robbins Hebrew Academy in 2015. According to head of school, Claire Sumerlus, students at Robbins currently take two versions of the 10-session course during their time there: once in Grade 5, and again in Grade 7 or 8.

"I had to learn the hard way ... by getting a credit card, thinking it was free money and then having to pay it back very slowly and painfully," said Yakos Spiliotopoulos, who founded Extra Ed. "I just thought financial literacy was this gaping hole in the education we're providing to our kids."

Jewish schools were among Spiliotopoulos's first clients, he said, which opened his eyes to the cost of being Jewish - from tuition fees to bar and bat mitzvahs.

Though Extra Ed is popular, it comes with its own costs. Glaser said Leo Baeck relies on private donations and community support to help fund it. Meanwhile, schools are also finding creative ways to integrate financial literacy in-house.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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Herzliah High School students engage in financial discussions with students from McGill University. TOVA HAVIS PHOT

Young entrepreneurs learn how to create an environmentally friendly business

At Paul Penna Downtown Jewish Day School in Toronto, the Grade 5 students participate in a year-long "classroom economy," which - much like the actual economy - is a force at play in all aspects of daily life. Students apply to jobs, earn different salaries based on responsibility and get paid in "saltzies," a currency named after teacher Jaime Saltz. This leads to big decisions on how to spend their "saltzies" while accounting for tzedakah deductions (matched by 10 per cent in real dollars) and taxes.

"The kids have questions like, 'Well there's a pencil tax but what if I never lose my pencil? Why am I paying somebody else's pencil tax?'" said Sheri Rapp, a parent who works at the school. "It's a big lesson."

In Montreal, a mandatory financial education course for Secondary V (Grade 11) was reinstated in 2017 after being eliminated eight years prior. The Association of Jewish Day Schools directed *The CJN* to the course in response to questions surrounding its schools' financial literacy programs.

That said, there is leeway in terms of how the required knowledge is imparted, and some teachers are taking advantage of the opportunity.

At Bialik High School, students work together to build and manage a business, according to Naomi Blumer, director of strategic communications. They sell a variety of products, usually food-related, and, after paying out the "stockholders," profits are donated to charity.

Frédéric Côté, a teacher at Herzliah High School, uses a Dragon's Den-esque competition he calls "Lion's Den" to bring the material to life. He also offers an optional economics class he designed in which students collaboratively manage an intramural hockey team as if it were a professional team, taking on different roles - from marketing to production - while respecting a salary cap.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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Students from Montreal's Bialik High School created their own business model. A. KALAB PHOTOS

Kids taking on an entrepreneurship challenge. ERIC [illegible]

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

"You're touching on all the main functions of a business," Côté said. This is especially pressing when you consider that, in Quebec, high school ends after Grade 11, which means most of his students will graduate in a matter of months.

"I have kids that are Grade 11 and they don't have a savings account," Côté said. "(They say) 'Oh my parents are taking care of everything.' I say, 'Well your parents are not eternal so what do you expect to do? People (need to)understand the value of things ... I think that should come at a younger age."

In some cases, parents are getting a jump on the system by enrolling their children in after-school programs because they feel their school doesn't offer enough financial literacy education or their kids are younger than the grades in which personal finance is taught.

Explorer Hop offers after-school programs and camps for kids as young as six.

"We break it down to a level that even a six-year-old can understand where we say, when you're in a shop, ask yourself three questions: Do I need it? Will I use it? And will I enjoy it?" said founder Hasina Lookman. "By the time they get their phone, it's too late to teach them the value of money because they're already swiping, and they're already tapping at Starbucks."

Since participating in Explorer Hop programs, Max Herczeg, 11, has opened his own stock trading account and started a 3D printing business, which has earned him a few hundred dollars, despite that his Hebrew day school, Bialik, doesn't offer financial literacy.

Money Matters (formerly called Money Works) at the Schwartz/Reisman Jewish Community Centre is open to kids as young as 10. Basia Pozin, a TD Canada Trust branch manager who developed the program, said over 1,000 students have taken her class, plus she's been asked to teach it privately to groups in the community.

For Michelle Herscu, a Vaughan, Ont.-based chartered professional accountant with two kids in public school, financial literacy starts at home.

"We always have discussions about money and I made them understand that when mommy goes to the ATM, it's not that the bank gives her free money. You have to work hard to earn every penny," Herscu said.

When she discovered her son Shachar, who's in Grade 7, had yet to learn about personal finance in school, she took it upon herself to open him a bank account, and sign him up for a free online course through McGill University called "Personal Finance Essentials."

But Herscu is a special case. A survey by Credit Canada found that one-in-three Canadians think that talking about money is taboo, and a Bank of Canada survey found that 27 per cent of Canadians had low levels of financial literacy while 36 per cent had medium low levels. Which means that even if parents wanted to teach it, and had time to do so, the majority would be unfit.

These are complex subjects to grasp – even for adults, many of whom didn't have financial literacy taught in their schools when they were growing up. When speaking of Leo Baeck's Grade 7 stock market learning component, Glaser said: "I'll be honest, as an adult, I don't even have that knowledge." And Spiliotopoulos from Extra Ed admitted that teachers sometimes react to his lessons with, "Oh my god! How much am I paying in bank fees?"

Lookman, of Explorer Hop, recalled working on Bay Street with graduates from top universities who were making $28,000 a year and spending $20 a day on lunch.

"This debt culture has to change. My daughter's generation has to deal with the global climate crisis. And I believe that ... we have a fundamental responsibility to teach them the skills they need so they can appreciate the future they deserve," Lookman said. "Should the school do more? Everyone should do more." ■

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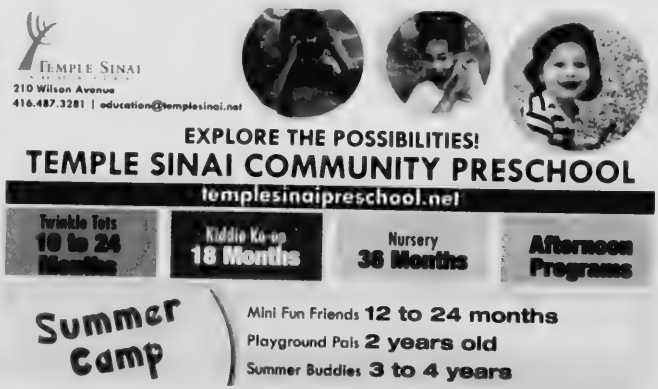


Autistic teen educating others about neurodiversity

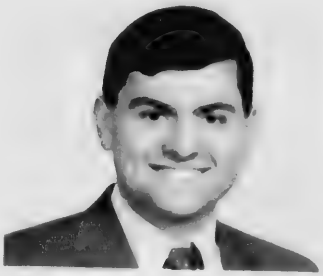
LIOR ZALTZMAN
KVELLER.COM

These days, individuals with autism are increasingly represented in all aspects of public life, from climate activist Greta Thunberg to Kayla Cromer, an actress with autism who plays a character with autism in the TV comedy *Everything Is Gonna Be Okay*.

Despite these strides, however, there's still a lot that most people don't understand about living with autism.

For Ethan Hirschberg, 18, living with autism isn't always easy. The teen was bullied for his stuttering and his stimming – repetitive self-stimulatory behaviour that many individuals with autism engage in (for Hirschberg, this includes walking back and forth and moving his eyes in specific patterns). He struggles with so many things that neurotypical people (those without autism or other neurological irregularities) take for granted, like processing emotions, acquiring social skills and deciphering non-verbal communication.

But Hirschberg, who was diagnosed with high-functioning autism when he was two, decided to channel his frustration into something positive. He started a blog, *The Journey Through Autism*, which aims to help others understand the way he and other neurodiverse kids see the world.



Ethan Hirschberg

"With the lack of autism awareness in our world today, I needed to make a change," Hirschberg says. "Many people with autism have a hard time communicating their thoughts and emotions. As someone on the spectrum that can do that, I felt obligated to do this, as I hoped to be able to speak for others who cannot speak for themselves."

Hirschberg has a particular talent for expressing his thoughts and emotions. In his blog, he communicates in honest and clean language what it means to live with autism, and at the same time, he makes it clear that the experiences he shares are his own.

Some of the blogs are personal, such as how he deals with understanding friendship and how he processes emotions like depression, but the blog also contains advice for professionals working with people with autism – including teachers, speech pathologists and, of course, parents of autistic children.

Hirschberg's advice is sensitive and smart. His post about parents is especially moving, as he starts it with empathy for the helplessness and the frustration parents sometimes feel, "because you feel like everything that you try either doesn't work or backfires on you."

But for Hirschberg, who is also an entrepreneur, the blog was just a starting point. The teen started speaking about his experience at schools, organizations, conferences and even for U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein.

"I appreciate learning of your efforts to raise awareness about autism. I am proud to commend you on your efforts to better the lives of others. Your passion and dedication to the autism community are truly inspirational," she wrote about Hirschberg.

Hirschberg says his favourite thing about public speaking is "that I'm able to answer questions, deepen my connections and relate my own experiences to other people around me."

For his advocacy work for those on the autism spectrum, Hirschberg was awarded a Diller Teen Tikkun Olam Award.

"With this recognition, I am being told that what I do matters in this world, that I am making a difference," Hirschberg wrote in a blog post about getting the award.

"Eliminating stigmas against autism and special needs in general, along with bringing more (much-needed) awareness is the overarching goal," he says.

"My goal is to educate, advocate and inspire individuals in the neurodiverse and neurotypical communities alike," Hirschberg says. ■

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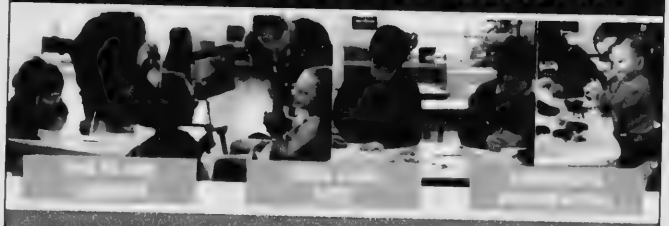

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Jews for Judaism Saving Jewish Lives

We at Jews for Judaism had a rude awakening several years ago. Our organization was originally founded in 1989 in response to a very serious threat to the Jewish community. Hundreds of evangelical Christian groups began directing tremendous energy and resources toward targetting Jews worldwide for conversion. Many of these groups, like Jews for Jesus, sought to create the impression that embracing the Christian faith was not a betrayal of one's Jewishness. Unfortunately, their efforts have been very successful and many thousands of Jews have joined them.

Jews for Judaism responded with comprehensive educational programs and materials to alert the Jewish community to the tactics of these groups and to clarify exactly why Judaism rejects the claims of these missionaries. Aside from working to inoculate Jewish people against their efforts, our counselling services helped Jews who were seduced to return to their families and their rightful faith.

"I am a Jew who converted to Christianity in college, but now, thanks to your online outreach, I have returned to Judaism."

But then we came to the realization that Jews for Jesus is not the problem – they are merely a symptom of a much larger problem. The *real* problem is the disconnect between a growing number of Jewish people and Judaism. This rupture is the real culprit and can manifest in numerous ways.

Lacking any real anchor in Judaism, some Jews might be drawn to Christianity. But others might just as easily be lured by Eastern spiritual paths. Numerous studies estimate that about 25% of North American Buddhists come from a Jewish background. And way out of proportion to our numbers, Jews are overrepresented in the numerous cults and New Age religions that dot the spiritual landscape of North America.

Without a doubt, the greatest concern is with the massive numbers of young people who are giving up on religion altogether. The PEW Research Institute study of American Jewry in 2013 revealed that 32% of millennials did not identify with Judaism at all and that 68% are not raising their children as Jewish. This serious erosion of Jewish identity and general movement toward total assimilation should be a serious wake-up call for us.

Hand-wringing is not an appropriate response to the steady stream of people taking leave of Judaism. We must strive to stem the tide and ultimately help those who have strayed to return to their true spiritual foundation. Our sages have pointed out that the Torah's obligation to return lost property to its owner applies, by extension, to helping return lost souls to their true heritage.

The prophet Hosea, speaking 2,700 years ago, warned, "My people are perishing due to a lack of knowledge." Jews for Judaism's guiding principle is that knowledge is power; the most vital thing we Jews can do to reverse the devastation taking place today is to help Jewish people appreciate the profound wisdom and spiritual depth of Judaism. There are compelling reasons for Jews to embrace their heritage – and powerful tools available to transmit this knowledge.

Recognizing that people today live on their smart phones, tablets and computers, Jews for Judaism is harnessing the powerful potential of social media to reach young Jews wherever they are. We have produced hundreds of compelling and inspiring YouTube videos that are being viewed by over a million people a year and are changing Jewish lives. As one viewer wrote, "I am so grateful to have discovered the wonderful Jews for Judaism YouTube lectures by Rabbi Skobac. I am a Jew who converted to Christianity in college, but now, thanks to your online outreach, I have returned to Judaism."

Jews for Judaism has a robust Speakers' Bureau and we present our engaging and exciting lectures to audiences across the GTA and Canada. Your synagogue, organization, school or home group will certainly benefit from the wide variety of topics we discuss. As a participant informed us,

"I can't tell you how much you have helped me in very powerful ways in rediscovering my Judaism. Your lectures are so completely brilliant. You have succeeded in helping me get back to my roots of being a Jew. Thank you."

To find out more about the Jews for Judaism Speakers' Bureau and other services, such as our free counselling, that may be helpful to you, please visit our website www.jewsforjudaism.ca.

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In those days, at this moment

COMMENT: Why Purim is the perfect time to strengthen communal ties. **PAGE 10**

Abuse of process

Accused Nazi war criminal Oberlander's deportation delayed again. **PAGE 12**

Flower power

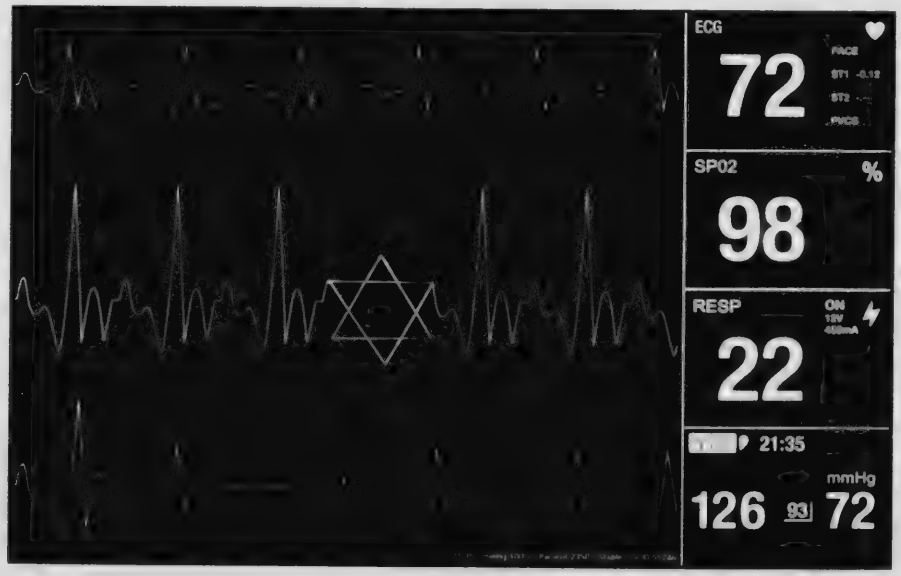
A Jewish restaurateur fights racism in Toronto amid the coronavirus scare. **PAGE 17**

A Calgary rabbi's 'sacred treasure'

Q&A: Mark Glickman may have been the first rabbi in a century to see the Cairo Genizah. **PAGE 37**

A matter of life and death

How Jewish nursing homes approach medical assistance in dying. **PAGE 8**



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Quotable

> [illegible]
>
> — **Avram Mlotek, an Orthodox rabbi who endorsed same-sex weddings, on Facebook after officiating his first one of two men.**

Inside today's edition

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Trending

A match made of millennials

Nathan Fielder, the Vancouver native who explored the surreal side of entrepreneurship on *Nathan for You*, has stirred enthusiasm for his next project: a collaboration with *Uncut Gems* filmmakers Benny and Josh Safdie. *The Curse* is their pilot for the Showtime network, about an *HGTV* host couple trying to overcome one. Fielder also used *Nathan for You* to launch Summit Ice Apparel, after he learned that the company that made his favourite jacket supported a Holocaust denier. The venture raised a fast $150,000 for the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, and continues to send sale proceeds there.

Back to shrinking like a zayde

Rick Moranis last showed his acting face in 1997's straight-to-video sequel, *Honey, We Shrunk Ourselves*. After a string of flops, combined with wanting to focus on his kids after the death of his wife, he opted to lay low for 20 years. Cartoon and commercial voice work, a couple of comedy albums (including *My Mother's Brisket and Other Love Songs*) were eventually followed by two live SCTV reunions in Toronto. Now Moranis, 66, will co-star in *Shrunk*, an update of Disney's *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids* franchise that began three decades ago. (His re-emergence also coincided with a billboard for his 1987 movie *Spaceballs* resurfacing on the side of a Toronto building.)

Nathan Fielder COMEDY CENTRAL

The trivial tragedies of HQ

Scott Rogowsky caught his hosting break in 2017 on HQ Trivia, a phone-based game that offered small cash prizes. But co-founders Colin Kroll and Rus Yusupov scored $15 million in fast funding due to acclaim for their previous video app, Vine. Kroll died of an accidental overdose of fentanyl-laced heroin the following year. Soon after, "Quiz Daddy" Rogowsky quit to cover baseball for streaming network DAZN, and HQ's popularity waned. Having run out of money, it shut down on Feb. 14. "HQ didn't die of natural causes," tweeted Rogowsky. "It was poisoned with a lethal cocktail of incompetence, arrogance, short-sightedness & sociopathic delusion." ■

Compiled by Marc Weisblott of CJN Today, our email newsletter. CJNews.com/today.

Gematria

36

The age difference between actor Al Pacino, 79, and Israeli actress Meital Dohan, 43, who said that she dumped him because he's "an elderly man" who "doesn't like to spend money."

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The age difference between Steven Spielberg's daughter Mikaela, 23, who revealed that she's a porn star and aspiring exotic dancer in Nashville, and her reported fiancé Chuck Pankow, 50.

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The age difference between fashion tycoon Michael Lewis, 61, and the late Princess Diana's niece Lady Kitty Spencer, 29, who's undergoing an Orthodox Jewish conversion prior to their marriage.

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Letters to the Editor

Recognizing populism

Deborah Lipstadt made an interesting observation in her latest book. She proposes that if you come from the left, you only see what is over your right shoulder and blame everything on the right. Likewise, if you come from the right, you only gaze over your left shoulder, blaming all the world's woes on the left.

Rabbi Dow Marmur ignores those who preceded Ontario premiers Doug Ford and Mike Harris and Toronto mayor Rob Ford ("Recognizing populism," Feb. 13). I am not surprised by the swing in votes that brought these politicians in and I won't be surprised if it swings the other way again soon.

But what I would like to see is a politician who comes in with liberal values and is also grounded in reality. We need someone who is strong down the middle and someone who is more likely to reach a consensus amongst us.

Allan Cheskes
Toronto

Honouring a caring doctor

Dr. May Cohen and her husband Dr. Gerry Cohen were my mentors in the early 1970s in Bathurst Manor, a Toronto neighbourhood where many Holocaust survivors settled ("Documentary explores doctor's contribution to women's health care," Feb. 6). She was the only female physician of the five-member Overbrook Medical Centre, and was widely respected by our medical colleagues. It didn't take long for me to notice her devotion to her patients, and their devotion to her. I also knew May's parents, both quite prominent in Jewish affairs.

In 1976, when she and her husband went on to scholarly teaching positions at McMaster University it was a natural fit for them, and both became prominent in teaching family medicine students.

I had the singular pleasure of meeting May Cohen recently at a seminar. I told her that wherever I go in our community, some of her former patients remind me of our clinic days together. In fact, a friend recently told me that Gerry Cohen delivered both her children and treated them with May's help in the 1970s. I am honoured to have worked with her.

Dr. David Rapoport
Toronto

Dresden revisited

There has always been talk about the bombing of Dresden ("Revisiting the bombing of Dresden," Feb. 13). Whether or not it was a valid military target, it was a valid casualty of war. Hitler committed the heinous atrocity first of targeting civilians in his march across Europe. Burning and bombing cities, rounding up civilians, shooting, deporting, burning them alive. He is the one who brought them into the war and made them a player on this field of battle.

One has to expect that throwing eggs at your neighbour's house will eventually get them thrown back. And it is not unreasonable to expect some broken windows and smashed doors in the process.

Regardless of the strategic importance, attacking an enemy's civilians is a way to destroy morale and turn their people against them. It was also payback for what the Nazis themselves did. There are many sayings that apply here. My preferred one, in this instance, is: what goes around comes around.

Joe Hendel
Dollard des Ormeaux, Que.

Letters to the editor can be emailed to cjninfo@gmail.com. All letters must bear the sender's name, address and telephone number. We reserve the right to edit and condense letters.

The CJN

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Do Jews need to worry about Bernie Sanders? Will Israel's third election result in a fourth? On an all-politics episode of The Canadian Jewish Shmooze, *guest Yoni Belete, a former staffer at the Israeli Embassy in Ottawa, breaks down the ongoing political issues foremost on Jewish minds*

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Rabbi2Rabbi

Can't buy me love... for God

An extravagant party for a child's bar/bat mitzvah may be a nice way to show how important they are to you, but it's no guarantee they will feel the need to maintain an ongoing commitment to Jewish life.

RABBI DEBRA LANDSBERG
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PIXABAY PHOTO

Rabbi Kanofsky: Sponge cake and shnapps. Very simple. These are the essentials you need to celebrate a bar mitzvah.

In days gone by, a bar mitzvah was celebrated the day a boy had his first aliyah to the Torah. The reception included a slice of cake, a little l'chaim, plenty of good wishes from the minyan and fond pats on the head for the young fellow.

Fast forward to today, when the simple coming-of-age ceremony has become a lavish affair, with hundreds of guests and menus that rival wedding receptions. I confess: I enjoy the modern bar/bat mitzvah – I like seeing families celebrate and enjoy the nachas from their children's lives.

The question is whether the bar/bat mitzvah marks the end of an era for a child's involvement in Jewish life, or the beginning?

Rabbi Landsberg: Lavish (and even not so lavish) affairs can come at a cost well beyond the financial. Planning a bar/bat mitzvah can feel like a stressful part-time job for at least one family member. If the celebrations were simpler, would families focus instead on what happens after the party is over? I'm not sure. There are larger trends among Jews that might better explain why modern bar/bat mitzvah ceremonies seem more like a graduation from Jewish life rather than graduating into it.

But I don't want to sound the death knell on these celebrations as markers of entry into engaged adult Jewish life. When families, and especially cohorts of families, choose to demonstrate, encourage, support and/or require ongoing participation, teenagers can become some of the most engaged Jews in the community.

Enough studies show that teenage Jewish experiences, such as youth groups, Jewish summer camps and teen trips to Israel, do more to engender adult Jewish life than even the most lavish and joyous bar or bat mitzvah party. I think that is why many congregations dedicate so many resources to enable families to send their teens on these programs.

Rabbi Kanofsky: Even youth groups, summer camps and teen trips to Israel seem cut from the same cloth as lavish bar/bat mitzvah celebrations. These are undoubtedly coming from a good place: parents want to celebrate their kids' life-cycle events and want the best for them. Bravo! At the same time, though, I can't help wondering if there's a subconscious bit of outsourcing going on. In other words, if I can just purchase the right product, my kids will be interested and engaged in Judaism.

But just as there are no guarantees in life, there is no item or experience we can buy that will ensure our kids' dedication to Jewish life. There were no teen engagement initiatives or trips to Israel in Europe 150 or 1,500 years ago, nor were there sculptures of the bar mitzvah boy in ice or chopped liver. How then did the Jewish people survive?

Of course, the sociopolitical and economic conditions were very different then. And yet, there are some things in life on which you can't hang a price tag. The best odds of ensuring a young person's Jewish future rest with families whose engagement with Judaism is part of daily life, and not only for special occasions. If Judaism is real and exciting and meaningful throughout childhood, that's the best hope that a child will stay connected after the bar/bat mitzvah.

Rabbi Landsberg: The material and spiritual life of Jews has clearly differed across place and time (need I even mention bat mitzvah celebrations?), and the question of whether we can raise the next generation of Jews to be passionate has yet to be answered.

North American Jews are not the first to wrestle with the particular spiritual challenges that come with comfort: Moses himself warned the people of Israel about how their hearts can disconnect from their relationship with God (and the people as a whole) when they are settled in the land, living with wealth and security.

Knowing there are no guarantees, what should we do in our particular circumstances? Perhaps preparations for bar and bat mitzvahs should become as much or even more for the parents than it is for the children – strengthening their ongoing practice, deepening their daily Jewish engagement and creating the soulful Jewish life they wish for themselves and their children. ■

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Daniels BAIF

What's Israel got to do with it?

It's not difficult to spot the connections between Canadian Jews and this country's indigenous peoples. Both communities are forced to confront past traumas on a daily basis. Our government, at various points in Canadian history, has sought to systematically exclude Jews and the First Nations. We have both faced significant struggles in attempting to integrate into society at large, and clearly, considering the hate crimes often violent – perpetrated against both populations, that work is far from over.

For some Canadian Jews, the standoff between the hereditary chiefs of Wet'suwet'en Nation and the RCMP in northern British Columbia may revive memories of their own dispossession and persecution in Europe (not to mention Canada's infamous none is too many policy). If you come from the family of a Shoah survivor or, like many of us, have interacted with any survivors, then you know how real and paralyzing the anguish can be.

Wet'suwet'en chiefs who oppose a pipeline running through their territory have been supported by countrywide protests. As Jews, we very well understand the value of communal solidarity, of focusing on faith and tradition in troubling times. That is why it is so unfortunate that some railway blockaders and their supporters have used the opportunity to hurl anti-Israel positions into the fray.

Take the Palestinian BDS National Committee, the coalition of Palestinian groups that leads the international boycott campaign against Israel. On Feb. 13, it issued a press release headlined Palestinians Stand in Solidarity With the Wet'suwet'en Nation.

"From the occupied Palestinian territory, we stand in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en nation and land defenders … who continue to resist Canada's colonial incursions of their unceded territories," it began.

It concluded, "From Palestine to Wet'suwet'en, we stand united with you in the struggle against settler colonialism, racism, corporate criminality and your inalienable rights for justice and self-determination."

Of all the things that should bring Canada's Jews and First Nations together, the notion of indigeneity might be at the top of the list. When supposed indigenous "allies" only see the value of one people's historic connection to a land, while actively working to devalue another's, it only serves to muddy the waters. The situation in Canada is complicated enough without dragging Israel into it to satisfy someone else's ulterior motives.

•••

On a recent episode of *The Canadian Jewish Shmooze*, our flagship podcast, we asked Yoni Belete, a former staffer at the Israeli Embassy in Ottawa, to set the stage ahead of Israel's March 2 election, the third national vote in less than a year. He said: "The big thing that I think Israelis will be going into the polls thinking about is, first and foremost, how do we avoid a fourth (election)?"

Yet, with less than a week until election day, Israel remains mired in a political stalemate. According to two polls published on Sunday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party leads Benny Gantz's Blue and White by the slimmest of margins. (It was the first time this cycle that Likud has outpolled Blue and White, perhaps as a result of revelations about a new investigation into a former company run by Gantz though he is not named as a suspect But even if those results hold true, Israel doesn't seem closer to ending the deadlock in the Knesset, as those same polls also indicate that Likud is unlikely to be successful in building a right-wing coalition government, while Blue and White's road to a governing coalition appears even more unlikely.

Back in Canada, we await the results, and all the coalition conversations that are sure to follow. Hopefully, there won't be a fourth election later this year. ■ — YONI

From the Archives

Shopping in the Manor

ONTARIO JEWISH ARCHIVES, BLANKENSTEIN FAMILY HERITAGE CENTRE, UJA FEDERATION OF GREATER TORONTO

The Cigar Store, in the plaza at Wilmington Avenue and Overbrook Place in Toronto, was a destination for generations of children in Bathurst Manor. Standing behind the counter is owner David Herman in 1972. Contact ojainquiries@ujafed.org to learn how to preserve your history of growing up in the Manor. From the Blum Family collection.

SeeJN

Airstrike

ABED RAHIM KHATIB/FLASH90 PHOTO

A ball of fire and smoke rises above buildings in Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip on Feb.24. The IDF launched a series of airstrikes against Palestinian Islamic Jihad targets after the terror group fired at least 14 rockets at southern Israel earlier in the day.

Essay

The benefits of a bilingual Israel

Jason Shvili

Canada and Israel are two very different countries, but they do share some significant similarities. Canada promotes itself as a multicultural country, and I would contend that Israel, while still being the Jewish state, is just as diverse as Canada

Three-quarters of Israel's population is Jewish, but the Jewish population of Israel is certainly not uniform in terms of culture and traditions. There are Ashkenazic Jews and Mizrachi Jews, with very distinct cultural, linguistic and religious traits.

There are even subcultures within the Ashkenazic and Mizrachi communities. A Jew from Russia and a Jew from Germany may share some traditions, but certainly not all and a Jew from Ethiopia will have traditions that are quite distinct from a Jew whose origins are in Iraq or Yemen.

The key difference between Israel and Canada is that the former is the construct of people returning to their ancestral land, while the latter is composed mostly of people whose origins are in other parts of the world. Both countries continue to wrestle with accommodating the rights of the different communities that live there.

And while Israel is light years ahead of any country in the Middle East when it comes to accommodating the rights of different ethnic, religious or linguistic groups, I believe there are some measures that Canada has taken to accommodate different groups of people that could – and perhaps should – be taken in Israel.

For example, both countries are officially bilingual but Canada has gone further in entrenching the equality of status for both official languages than Israel has.

Road sign in the Negev, Israel WIKIMEDIA PHOTO

Canada has a very comprehensive law dealing explicitly with the use of English and French, designating both as official languages and requiring that all federal services be available in both languages upon request.

Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms proclaims English and French as Canada's official languages and states that they are equal in status. It also provides the right for both English and French speakers to be educated in their first language regardless of where in the country they live.

Israel provides many government services in Hebrew and Arabic, including in education. However, Arabic maintains an inferior status in Israel, both in theory and in practice.

For instance, only the Hebrew versions of laws drafted by the state are considered the authoritative versions. In addition, although education is provided by the state in Arabic at both the primary and secondary levels, the Arab education system in Israel is substantially inferior to its Jewish counterparts. Standardized test scores in Arabic language schools are significantly lower than those in Israel's Jewish schools.

While Arab Israeli students are required to learn Hebrew, in most cases, Jewish Israelis are not required to learn Arabic. There is no university in Israel where the primary language of instruction is Arabic (although there are Arab colleges).

Making Israel officially bilingual to the extent that Canada is would have a number of advantages for the Jewish state and its citizens.

To begin, Israel's Arab citizens would have a greater sense of inclusivity. Once they realize that Arabic is treated with the same respect as Hebrew, they will also realize that although Israel is a Jewish state it also strives to meet the needs of its non-Jewish citizens. Arab citizens who think of themselves as equal in Israel will be significantly less likely to engage in acts against the state.

On top of that, Jewish children around the country would begin studying Arabic in school, and in the process, learn to appreciate the language and culture of their Arab neighbours both within Israel and outside of it, thereby promoting peaceful coexistence.

There would also be tremendous economic benefits for Israel. A greater understanding of the Arabic language will make it easier for Israelis to do business with the Jewish state's Arab neighbours. This is especially important now as the Arab states begin to realize that it is better to have Israel as a friend rather than a foe. Trade ties between Israel and the Arab states will grow, leading to new jobs and opportunities for all Israelis.

Israel would be wise to adopt Canada's practices regarding official languages. That would mean a Basic Law on official languages, proclaiming Hebrew and Arabic as the official languages of the state and decreeing that both languages are equal in status. Such a law would establish an enforcement mechanism to ensure that Hebrew and Arabic are on equal footing in respect to delivering government services and educational opportunities.

Those who are opposed to putting Hebrew and Arabic on equal footing probably think that doing so would make Israel less of a Jewish state. But this is not true at all – quite the opposite, in fact. Equality is a Jewish value. We are supposed to treat others as we would like to be treated, remembering the treatment that our ancestors received when they were enslaved in Egypt. Enacting official language laws and policies similar to those of Canada would make Israel more of a Jewish state, not less. ■

Jason Shvili lives in Toronto.

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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
FEBRUARY 27, 2020

Weighing the sanctity of life

How can faith based nursing homes respect the law when it collides with Jewish beliefs?

LILA SARICK
lsarick@thecjn.ca

It's been almost four years since terminally ill Canadians have had the legal right to a medically assisted death, but for patients in Jewish nursing homes, there is no guarantee they will be able to choose how and where they die.

Across the country, Jewish long-term care homes have grappled with the legislation, with some permitting medical assistance in dying (known widely as MAiD), and others strictly forbidding it. The differences reflect the lack of consensus in the Jewish community, which is starkly divided on the topic.

At the heart of the matter is an impossible standoff: How can faith-based nursing homes respect a law that allows medical professionals to administer drugs that end a patient's life when it collides head-on with Jewish beliefs that forbid causing death and are the institution's very underpinnings?

The problem isn't simply a philosophical one. Megan Greenberg faced this dilemma in May 2017, when her mother, Dr. Devorah Greenberg, suffering from Parkinson's disease and a resident at Louis Brier Home & Hospital in Vancouver, asked for and was approved for MAiD, as the law requires. The nursing home, however, does not permit MAiD on its site.

Megan Greenberg, her mother, a rabbi and the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association presented letters to the home's board asking for a change in policy.

"I appreciate that your decisions are complex and that procedural changes take time. In the interim, others with cases similar to mine may come forward seeking similar procedural change. Let it begin with me. Please let me die at home," Devorah Greenberg wrote.

The home would not be swayed.

In an essay posted on the website of Dying With Dignity Canada, Megan Greenberg wrote that her mother was transferred to a clinic, which was made as homey as possible with her mother's paintings and pillows, for the procedure.

"She was, and I will always be, grateful for the right to access MAiD and for the love and care that surrounded her last days. The only sadness she felt was that she was removed from her home," she wrote.

Just a month after Devorah Greenberg's death, a similar situation arose again at Louis Brier, but this time, rather than transfer the patient – Barry Hyman, 83, who had lung cancer and suffered a stroke – a doctor sneaked into the home to provide MAiD.

The home filed a complaint against Dr. Ellen Wiebe with the College of Surgeons and Physicians of British Columbia, but the college decided not to censure Wiebe and dismissed the complaint.

Since then, the home has tightened up its physician privileges, but its position has not changed, said Louis Brier's CEO, David Keselman, in an interview.

"We follow the Orthodox stream of Judaism, and according to that, MAiD is considered to be a suicide, and Judaism doesn't support suicide," he said.

"Being a publicly funded organization, we will never turn anyone away, but consciously, the decision was made that we as a Jewish organization need to follow a certain path in Judaism."

Faith-based institutions were forced to consider where they stood on MAiD in 2015, when the Supreme Court of Canada overturned a decades-old decision and gave the federal government a tight timeline to legalize the process. The law, passed in June 2016, requires patients who have a "grievous and irremediable condition" to be assessed by two different health-care providers and to be able to give consent on the day of their death in order to be eligible for MAiD.

Since then, there have been at least 6,749 medically assisted deaths, about one per cent of all deaths in Canada, according to Health Canada.

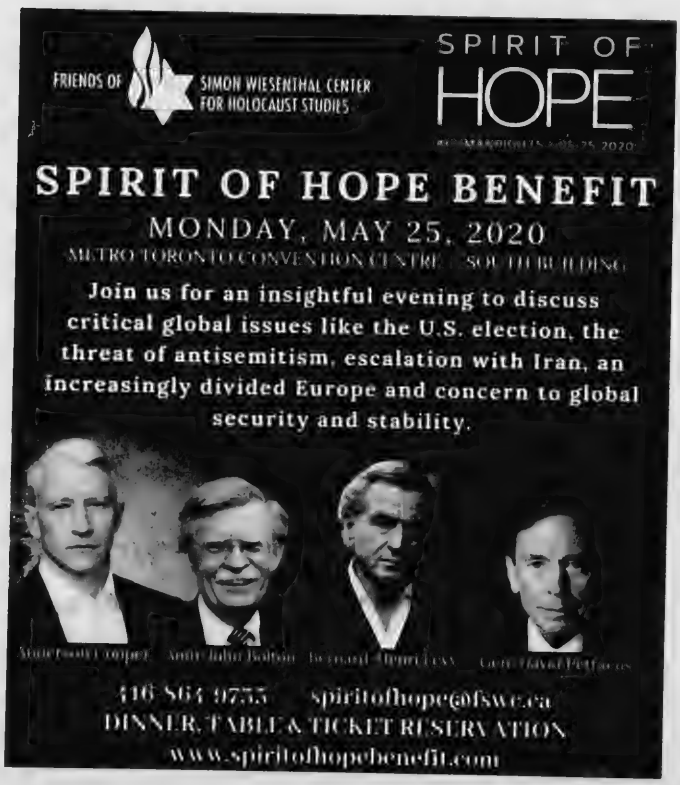
The federal government has just finished holding consultations on whether to broaden the law, permitting among other changes, advanced requests for assisted dying and including "mature minors" in its provisions.

Jewish nursing homes have responded to MAiD in a variety of ways. Louis Brier tells families entering the facility that it does not permit MAiD, but does allow the assessments to be conducted in the home. To date, three transfers from the home have occurred for the procedure, Keselman said.

Ottawa's Hillel Lodge is one of the few Jewish care homes that puts its opposition to MAiD in black and white in its resource guide for families, stating, "While we respect the authority of the government/Supreme Court of Canada, and the individual's right to choose, medical assistance in dying contravenes Jewish values and ethics and is not supported by Hillel Lodge."

CEO Ted Cohen says Hillel Lodge consulted with other faith-based nursing homes before coming up with its position.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23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Why not become a four-time-a-year Jew?

Rabbi Asher Vale

I have never really understood three-day-a-year-Jews. I get it that these are generally people who are not very religious and, as such, are uncomfortable going to shul on other Jewish holidays, not to mention every Shabbat. But they still want to maintain a connection to the faith, which is commendable, especially in this era of growing assimilation and decreasing synagogue affiliation.

The part I don't comprehend is the choice of the High Holidays as the time for their appearance in shul. The services on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur can be very lengthy, solemn in tone and difficult to follow. Hardly the opportunity for a meaningful spiritual experience for someone who doesn't pray regularly.

As an expert on shuls - not because I'm a rabbi but based on going to daven twice a day, every single day - if I had to recommend two holidays for attending synagogue, they would be Purim and Simchat Torah. Both are exciting festivals that are audience interactive, so to speak.

Since Purim is coming up, let's talk about that holiday. It's a time when many people come to shul dressed in costume. They bring all kinds of noise-making devices – in some synagogues, the selections are mind-boggling and ear-splitting. And, the whole service only lasts about an hour. The shul experience is upbeat and the entire day is celebrated with parties and lots of eating. You're not going to find that on Yom Kippur.

I don't want to give the impression that Purim is a purely fun and frivolous festival. Far from it. Nor is it only for children. The Feast of Lots is one of the most profound and relevant holidays on the Jewish calendar.

Haman, the main villain of the Megillat Esther story, was as wicked as any of the infamous Jew-haters of recent centuries. Learning about him can give us insights into our own period of rising anti-Semitism. King Ahasuerus was the ruler of the most powerful nation in the world, yet considered a fool by many. He had Jewish progeny (through his marriage to Queen Esther) and was a pawn in the Almighty's hand, manipulated to act in favour of the Jewish people. Comparison to any modern-day politician is pure coincidence. Or is it?

> *The Feast of Lots is one of the most profound and relevant holidays on the Jewish calendar*

Even the custom of getting drunk on Purim is serious business. The Talmud says that people are required to imbibe until they can't distinguish between blessing Mordechai and cursing Haman. The goal is to reach a higher level of spiritual awareness, not to get ripped for no purpose. However, before you try this one at home, keep in mind that only those who can hold their liquor should do this. Otherwise, drinking to that degree is considered a sin.

An important component of the Purim celebration is focusing on others. *Mishloach manot* are gifts of food given to strengthen friendships or create new ones. *Matanot le'evyonim* are donations to those who are in need.

In neighbourhoods with a high concentration of Orthodox people, it's become the practice in recent years for yeshivah students to be driven up and down the streets, collecting from house to house for worthy causes. There are also organizations that use modern technology to enable you to make a donation in Canada on Purim that will be given to poor people in Israel the same day.

I'm not trying to dissuade anyone from going to shul on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. There are certainly ways of making the holiest days of the year relevant and meaningful. I would also risk raising the ire of my rabbinic colleagues with such a recommendation.

However, I am suggesting that you consider becoming a four-time-a-year Jew and making Purim a time for enhancing your annual spiritual experiences in an entertaining yet profound way. ■

Purim is a time to strengthen community ties

Mordechai Ben-Dat

In just over a week, we will celebrate the holiday of Purim. Our young children and grandchildren know this holiday as a celebration of indulgence, where wacky costumes and even noise-making are encouraged during prayers, while treats flow steadily like a river of sweet caramel among friends and families.

We – the parents and grandparents – happily join the younger ones in celebrating. We delight in a festive meal, enjoy a drink or two and are perhaps a bit more generous than usual when dropping coins into the tzedakah box. And of course, we listen to the reading of the megillah, the Scroll of Esther.

But, in a way that the children are still too young to grasp, we understand that the story of the megillah is more than a sunny invitation to frolic in the synagogue. Indeed, it is a dark tale of a genocide averted.

The many lessons imparted to us by our sages about the harrowing Purim experience of our forebears are, typically, inspiring. One in particular, however, calls to us today with special force and relevance.

In the climactic aftermath of Haman's unmasking, we read a variation of the Hebrew word *lekahel* five times within 25 verses. It describes the behaviour of the Jews who were dispersed throughout the 127 provinces of the Persian kingdom. Loosely translated, it means "to come together." It shares the same root from which the word *kehillah* (community) is derived.

At the critical moment, when their survival hung in the balance, the Jews behaved as a community. The Jews triumphed only after they deployed and demonstrated aspects of community in the ways that they related to each other and to their common enemy. Coming together as a community averted the deadly peril.

To be sure, such behaviour does not, cannot, nor ever was intended to mean conformity or uniformity of thought. This is clearly implied in the text when Mordechai is described as having been admired by most (but not all) of his brethren.

> *The story of the megillah is more than a sunny invitation to frolic in the synagogue*

This description rings true. Can it be realistic or reasonable to expect all individuals – even those within the same community – to have held identical views about Mordechai, despite the benefit of his actions and intervention on behalf of the Jews?

The importance of community-mindedness is not merely a quaint historical relic from our Jewish past. Rather, it has profound relevance today. It provides a guidepost for our own behaviour at a time when deep divisions rend political and civic life in the United States and spill over, alas, into intra-communal Jewish relations.

U.S. President Donald Trump is a polarizing figure. This is hardly a controversial observation. His unique form of polarity rebuffs and repels people of differing politics and beliefs. Republicans and Democrats seem unable to collaborate and co-operate even for the general good of their country. Indeed, they often seem unable or unwilling to engage in mutually respectful discussion.

Trump has succeeded in promoting the notion that political allegiance to him and his party is a sort of litmus test of allegiance to the Jewish state and the Jewish people. Unfortunately, Jews have become caught in these unsettling tectonic political shifts within American public life, pointing fingers, casting aspersions or simply turning away from each other for deigning to hold opposing views.

If Purim teaches us anything, it teaches us not to lose the essence of being a kehillah – more specifically, a kehillah kedoshah (holy community), as we have always called ourselves throughout history – and that, however much individual opinions may differ, we must recall the importance and the strength that follows when we, as Jews, behave as part of a cohesive, interconnected, bonded community. ■

'Hineni' can be a powerful response to our sick world

Norma Baumel Joseph

When God called to our ancestors in the biblical texts, the most famous response, the one most sharply expressed is "*hineni*." "I am here," a stark simple overpowering statement of preparedness. The call from one's creator is never expected, yet cannot be denied, to hear it must be an immense challenge, a consuming transcendent experience. How can a finite human being respond in the moment to such a commanding voice? In fact, how can anyone prepare for it?

I have heard sermons, legends and interpretive tropes explaining some of these texts, the active moments and biblical reactions. But I am still mystified. It requires a leap of the imagination to place oneself in such a situation and imagine a personal reaction.

In our tradition the variables of textual narratives are compounded by the contexts and subtexts. Not all the *hineni*'s come to teach us the same life lessons. Parsing text and tradition call for multiple levels of learning and experience.

The first encounter with this expression is the Abraham storyline (Exodus 3:4). God calls to Abraham who simply responds, "Here I am." Before we grasp the development of this narrative, I would note the absence of this combination in the Garden of Eden. God asks, "Where are you?" But Adam cannot answer *hineni*. He is not accessible in the mode of one who is fully present before God. On the other hand, Abraham is ready, prepared to do anything. Later, when Isaac calls to Abraham on their trip, he can again say *hineni* "I am here for you." Each time the phrase is used it resonates with slightly different meanings, but Abraham's usage is direct and wholehearted. And then finally, when God's messenger calls out to Abraham to halt, the responding *hineni* is thoroughgoing.

Moses, too, has his call of the determined moment (Exodus 22:11). He is summoned, via a burning bush, and must respond despite the oddities of the sight. Some have inferred the experiences, or the tests, as expressions of affection or prompts to zealous action. Others use these texts to substantiate the exceptionality of the protagonists. They are righteous men, called forth by their creator and they confront the occasion with courage and faith.

At each usage, variations filter through. One midrash sees Abraham's first *hineni* as a sign of his meekness and piety. Certainly, the placement of this text as the main reading for the second day of Rosh Hashanah evidences Judaism's hallowing of this specific performance or treatment of the expression. We are to express piety and humility on this holy day. We are to know how to be in the present and to present ourselves before our Creator. "Here I am! I am ready to listen, to per form as you command me."

Hineni can be a powerful response to our fragmented, malfunctioning and sick world. If we could really mean it, we might begin to repair and restore it.

But I believe there is another side to *hineni*, one not seen in these biblical tales but one not any less significant or sacred.

When I say, "I am here," I acknowledge that I exist. There is an "I" in the world and that "I" counts for something somewhere. In the biblical sense, I resonate with the concept that I am created in God's image, and that means I am significant. Each person is God-like, God-imbued, worthy of living, and existentially worthwhile. Each one deserves to be present in their life; able to stand up and say, "I am here." Erica Brown paraphrased the biblical *hineni* as, "I am fully present; I am fully present in my life."

We need to recall this in the battle against feelings of insignificance, against teen suicide, against those who find their lives meaningless. I, you, me, them: we are all here. It is urgent that we learn to appreciate human life - each individual. I am not trying to plead the case for some vague general concept of humanity as valuable, but rather the individual person who is distinctly present and precious.

That is our call today.

Can you respond *hineni*? ■

Do you disagree with our columnists? Have your say by writing to **cjninfo@gmail.com.**

Has the proposed peace plan made any difference ?

David Roytenberg

On Jan. 28, the Trump administration unveiled its peace proposal for Israel and Palestine, the so-called "deal of the century."

Reaction from the Palestinians was quick and predictable. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas rejected the deal out of hand as he had said, for months, that he would. The PA had refused to have anything to do with the consultations that led to the deal. Hamas responded by launching balloon- borne bombs into Israel.

While the Palestinian rejection was not unexpected, there was a spectrum of reactions from Jewish groups. Even some moderate supporters of Israel reacted with disgust and despair. "The Trump 'peace map' looks like a monster," wrote one. For those further to the left, the plan merely confirmed their expectations. The plan is "literally grand apartheid," wrote one Facebook friend.

Other observers saw something to work with. Some pointed out that to get more, Palestinians must return to the negotiating table. Prominent Israeli moderate Yossi Klein Halevi wrote in a Feb. 5 blog, that Israelis who are willing in principle to accept territorial compromise need to see the outlines of a comprehensive peace plan that Palestinians would support. The Israeli right, he wrote, must recognize that the idea of a Palestinian Arab state is not going away.

While the Palestinians get less under the new plan in Judea and Samaria, they gain blocks of Israeli territory in the Negev. The plan also envisions the transfer of some Israeli Arab towns to a future Palestinian state. Israeli Arabs were quick to protest this aspect of the plan as they want to remain part of Israel.

The Palestinian state is also offered guaranteed access to Israeli ports in Haifa and Ashdod and corridors connecting them to Jordan, providing outlets to get their goods to world markets.

The plan incorporates a long-standing Israeli demand that the Palestinian state would not be allowed to have an army, leaving security in the hands of the Israel Defence Forces. It envisions Israeli sovereignty over the Jordan valley and all existing Jewish communities, some of which would become enclaves largely surrounded by Palestinian territory. Crucially, the American proposal pre-emptively addresses the biggest obstacle to success in past peace plans: the idea that up to five million Palestinian Arabs who claim to be refugees have the right to "return" to live in the State of Israel.

Now that a few weeks have passed, has the peace plan made any difference to the situation on the ground? Both Israeli and Palestinian leaders have made statements suggesting that a new era has begun, for good or ill. But neither side has done anything so far to change the status quo.

The Palestinians tried to get the UN security council to declare the plan illegal but could not muster enough support. Although the EU foreign minister criticized the plan, the EU itself could not agree on a position. Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson endorsed the plan as a basis for negotiations. Some Arab governments attended the announcement of the plan's release but have not endorsed it.

Meanwhile initiatives to strengthen Israel's connections with Arab regimes continue to progress. Sudan's new government, for example, announced plans to open diplomatic relations with Israel.

In Israel there were loud calls from the right for the government to proceed immediately to annex territory designated for Israel in the new plan, but the Americans quickly indicated that that would be unwelcome and after some bluster, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who was recently indicted for corruption, has done nothing.

For Israel, the main gain from the Trump plan is increased room to manoeuvre, as the international consensus on the terms of a viable peace have begun to shift in its favour. By accepting Israel's security concerns and stating plainly that there is no right of return for Palestinians, the plan increases the chances that a future arrangement with the Palestinians would succeed, should they ever be willing to come to the table. ■

News

Oberlander case delayed; Russia requests his files

RON CSILLAG
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When accused Nazi war criminal Helmut Oberlander exhausted his final possible appeal at the Supreme Court of Canada last December, it appeared the next logical step was his deportation.

But the 96-year-old former Nazi death squad member and his lawyers have become experts at erecting roadblocks.

This time, lawyers have filed an application to the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) asking that the case against Oberlander be dismissed.

They argue that Oberlander's Canadian citizenship, acquired in 1960, has never been expunged and that the IRB lacks jurisdiction to issue a removal order. Doing so would be "an abuse of process," states the 42-page application obtained by *The CJN*.

His lawyers also submitted findings from an optometrist, audiologist and psychologist offering evidence that Oberlander is "legally blind, has delayed memory deficit, cognitive slowing and greatly diminished hearing," and those disabilities "must be accommodated."

The government has countered that Oberlander was admitted to Canada "through false representation or by knowingly concealing" his wartime service in the mobile Nazi death squad Einsatzkommando 10a, known as Ek10a, and thus never gained lawful entrance to this country.

Oberlander is not immune to deportation, as Canadian policy states "there will be no safe haven to those, like the Applicant, who commit crimes against humanity – be it through direct perpetration, complicity, or another mode of commission," says the government's 32-page response.

According to IRB spokesperson Anna Pape, Oberlander's lawyers must respond to the government's position by Feb. 28.

If the case is not dismissed, it will then proceed to an admissibility hearing, which, in turn, would determine whether a deportation order should be issued, Pape explained.

Meantime, Canada is mum on a request from Russia to share files on Oberlander.

Earlier this month, Russia said it had asked Canada to hand over legal files on Oberlander to help Moscow with an investigation into the mass murder of children at a Soviet orphanage in 1942.

According to a Feb. 14 Reuters report, Russia's Investigation Committee, which handles probes into serious crimes, said it wanted Canada's case and legal files on Oberlander to check his possible involvement in a massacre at an orphanage in the then-Soviet town of Yeysk.

Canada and Russia have a Mutual Legal Assistance treaty but any requests under the agreement are confidential and "therefore, we cannot confirm or deny the receipt of a request in this case," Ian McLeod, a spokesperson for the Department of Justice, told *The CJN*.

In a statement, the Russian committee said a death squad equipped with mobile gas chambers was deployed in 1942-43 to the German-occupied Krasnodar region, now in southern Russia.

Helmut Oberlander in undated photo

"As a result of one such operation, on Oct. 9 and 10, 1942, a mass murder of children at the Yeysk orphanage was committed," it said, according to Reuters.

The Investigative Committee said in October it had opened an inquiry into the murders at the orphanage. The bodies of 214 children were found in 1943 after Nazi forces were driven out of the region.

The committee said several translators and members of the death squad in the Krasnodar area were arrested and convicted in the 1940s and 1960s.

"However, Oberlander was able to escape criminal responsibility by hiding from preliminary investigative organs immediately after Germany's capitulation (in 1945)," it said.

Oberlander always maintained that he was a low-level translator with Ek10a, which operated in Nazi-occupied Ukraine and slaughtered thousands of civilians, mostly Jews.

He served with the unit from 1941 to 1943, claiming he had been conscripted as a teenager under duress and that he never took part in atrocities.

Oberlander has been fighting to keep his citizenship since 1995, when the RCMP started probing his involvement in war crimes. In 2000, the Federal Court found that he had lied about his wartime past to obtain Canadian citizenship.

On three occasions – 2001, 2007 and 2012 – the federal cabinet stripped him of citizenship. Each time, the decisions were overturned by the Federal Court of Appeal and returned to cabinet for reconsideration.

In 2017, his citizenship was revoked for the fourth time on the grounds that he had "made a voluntary, knowing and significant contribution to the crimes committed by Ek10a."

In 2018, the Federal Court dismissed Oberlander's application for a judicial review of that decision. The following year, the Federal Court ordered the file be closed.

Late last year, the Supreme Court of Canada declined to hear his appeal.

The government's reply to Oberlander's request to dismiss the case said those court rulings are binding on the IRB.

Oberlander was admitted to Canada in 1954 and went on to a successful real estate career in the Kitchener-Waterloo area. ■

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Canada backs Israel in ICC challenge

RON CSILLAG
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Canada has submitted a letter to the International Criminal Court (ICC) reiterating its position on Palestine, in a case in which Israel asked for Ottawa's support.

The letter, submitted to The Hague-based ICC on Feb. 14, repeats the policy that Canada does not recognize a Palestinian state, and that the court has no jurisdiction in the case now before it.

It's the same official position on Palestine Canada submitted to the ICC in 2015 and again in 2018.

The latest case began in December, when the ICC's chief prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, issued a preliminary report that called for an investigation into Israeli soldiers for war crimes perpetrated against Palestinians.

"I am satisfied that there is a reasonable basis to proceed with an investigation into the situation in Palestine," wrote Bensouda, adding, "In brief, I am satisfied that war crimes have been or are being committed in the West Bank, including east Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip."

The allegations include "disproportionate attacks" and "wilful killing and wilfully causing serious injury to body or health" by Israeli troops. As well, the report said Israeli authorities may have committed war crimes relating to "the transfer of Israeli civilians into the West Bank" since 2014.

Bensouda also pointed to evidence of war crimes by Hamas and other armed Palestinian groups.

She asked three ICC judges to first rule on whether the court has jurisdiction in the territories she cited.

"Canada's long-standing position is that it does not recognize a Palestinian state and therefore does not recognize the accession of such a state to international treaties," Guillaume Bérubé, a spokesperson for Global Affairs Canada, told *The CJN* in an email.

"In the absence of a Palestinian state, it is Canada's view that the (ICC) does not have jurisdiction in this matter under international law," Bérubé added.

He said Bensouda herself referred to Canada's position on Palestinian statehood in her request to the ICC panel looking into jurisdiction.

"As a friend and ally of Israel and friend of the Palestinian people, Canada is firmly committed to the goal of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, including the creation of a Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with Israel, achieved through direct negotiations between the parties," Bérubé stated.

> "[Canada's] position [is] that the ICC does not have jurisdiction in this matter"
>
> **Global Affairs Canada**

After the release of Bensouda's report, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wrote to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau asking that Canada condemn Bensouda's preliminary report.

Netanyahu called the report "unfounded and dangerous," and said the ICC has no jurisdiction to investigate because Palestine does not meet the criteria of statehood.

Trudeau's response to Netanyahu, if any, has not been made public.

There has been widespread support for Israel in the case. At least six countries – Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Brazil and Uganda – have filed petitions to become "friends of the court," or interveners in the matter. With that status, they would be permitted to offer their views and submit legal advice to the court on this case. Canada has not sought intervener status.

Israeli Foreign Minister Yisrael Katz tweeted on Feb. 14 that Israel "views favourably the fact that important countries ... express a clear position that the ICC does not have the authority to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict."

The tribunal that will rule on the court's jurisdictional reach has invited "Palestine, Israel and victims in the situation in the State of Palestine" to submit written views by March 16.

Palestine has been a member of the ICC since 2015, while Israel is not a member and does not recognize the court's jurisdiction. Still, it has mounted a fierce public campaign against the latest development.

Should the court agree that Palestine is not a formal state under international law, the ICC would not be able to hear the case.

Canada's financial contribution to the ICC will be $10.6 million this year. ■

Christian group objects to U.S. peace plan

RON CSILLAG
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For some of Canada's largest Christian denominations, U.S. President Donald Trump's Middle East "deal of the century" is anything but.

In letters to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Kairos Canada, an umbrella organization that represents 10 churches and religious groups, say the Trump peace plan favours Israel and ignores Palestinians.

Kairos and its member churches urged Trudeau to "publicly and unequivocally" reject the Trump plan.

The plan "contravenes international law and further undermines the human rights of millions of Palestinians," said the letter to Trudeau from Toronto-based Kairos, an interdenominational group that promotes human rights around the world.

Kairos said it was particularly concerned by the plan's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

"As you know, Jerusalem is a site of historical significance to both Israeli and Palestinian nationalities and of religious importance to Jewish, Muslim and Christian faiths. Recognizing this, it is essential that the sovereignty of the city be shared by Israelis and Palestinians, and all faith groups must have open and free access to their holy places," Kairos wrote.

The U.S. plan, unveiled in Washington by Trump and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Jan. 28, "entrenches the illegal Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories," Kairos wrote.

Kairos, which is administered by the United Church of Canada, has a long history of problematic relations with Israel. In 2009, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) cut a $7 million grant renewal to the group. Later, then federal cabinet minister Jason Kenney accused the organization of having an anti-Israel agenda.

Last year, Sen. Linda Frum accused Kairos of funnelling tax dollars to a Palestinian women's group that promotes the anti-Israel boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign (BDS).

In a less contentiously worded letter to the prime minister, the Anglican Church of Canada said the peace plan "is far from being a 'win-win' for Israelis and Palestinians. Rather, we recognize, with many others, including Canada, (that) peace with justice will not come by discounting or ignoring Palestinian rights and aspirations."

Most Rev. Linda Nicholls, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, called for an end to "the occupation of Palestinian lands" and for Palestinians to be "meaningfully involved in planning processes from the beginning."

The plan "offers nothing to Palestinians but a perpetual state of occupation," wrote Right Rev. Richard Bott, moderator of the United Church of Canada. "They see it as rewarding illegal land grabbing, and affirming those who promote occupation, annexation and dispossession, while completely discounting and ignoring Palestinian rights and aspirations."

In its letter, the Presbyterian Church in Canada asked Trudeau's to reject "this fundamentally flawed 'deal' on the world stage."

The U.S. plan "cannot bring about peace between Israel and Palestine, as it leaves in place and even cements the very thing that furthers conflict: the occupation and the illegal practices that have characterized it," wrote the church's moderator, Rev. Amanda Currie.

Peace cannot be "unilaterally imposed," said Bishop Susan Johnson, National Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. "Palestinians must be meaningfully involved as part of any peace process. The recent U.S. plan entrenches the occupation ... Ending the occupation is an essential first step for making the journey toward peace."

All the churches that wrote letters to Trudeau are members of Kairos.

Ottawa Rabbi Reuven Bulka, who has been involved in Christian-Jewish dialogue for decades, said no one expects any proposed peace plan to be accepted by all sides without negotiations. He noted that Arab countries have spoken favourably about the plan.

However, "slamming the door shut on the plan without even being willing to meet at the peace table is not helpful."

Instead of rejecting the plan, "why not encourage Palestinians to view it as a basis to resume bilateral talks to negotiate final status issues?" asked Mike Fegelman of HonestReporting Canada in a recent letter published in *The Hill Times*, in response to an opinion piece by Kairos on the U.S. peace plan. ■

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Food columnist was 'kosher Julia Child of Canada'

BARBARA SILVERTSEIN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Norene Gilletz could have been called Canada's queen of kosher cuisine. The author, columnist, and food blogger and consultant died Feb. 23 in Montreal after a long illness. She was 79.

Gilletz was the longtime food columnist for *The Canadian Jewish News*, and penned the weekly Shabbat Table for CJNews.com for several years before retiring last year.

She wrote 12 cookbooks. Her latest, *The Brain Boosting Diet: Feed Your Memory* was just published in December. She worked on this book despite suffering from a debilitating lung disease and she never missed a deadline for her weekly blog.

She wrote with humour, wisdom and humility, and despite her many accomplishments, many people will remember Gilletz as a kind-hearted and funny person. She drew people to her like a magnet, and so it was no surprise, when Norene's Kitchen, her Facebook Group, grew to more than 10,000 members.

"We have 10,000 friends on Norene's Kitchen and counting," she would joke. "My kitchen is crowded, but there's always room for more.'"

Norene Gilletz

> *She had a drive and zest for life comparable to none. I will miss her Facebook posts always following the latest food trends.*
>
> **Rose Reisman**

Her writing career began with *Second Helpings Please!* She was the editor of this best-selling kosher cookbook, published in 1968 by B'nai Brith Women in Montreal. "It all started at a tea membership," she recalled. "Our baking was so delicious someone suggested we write a cookbook."

Twelve cookbooks, hundreds of food columns and countless food demonstrations later, Gilletz was very much on the go, until about fall of 2018. In fact that year she even launched a podcast.

There were many accolades, but she was most proud of being the first recipient of the Gil Marks memorial award in 2015. She was honoured at KosherFeast, which took place in Secaucus, N.J.

"I was shocked when they announced my name," Gilletz recounted at the time. "I was speechless. What an honour. The best part is being a Canadian and being recognized by the international culinary community."

Gilletz said that for the award, leaders in the kosher cooking world were asked to nominate a respected culinary professional who is a mentor and a support for others in the field.

Gilletz certainly fit that bill. She was a mentor to so many people.

"When I started my career, Norene Gilletz was a role model for other like-minded women," food author and columnist Rose Reisman said. "She was always present, whether it be through her cookbooks, demonstrations, lectures, podcasts or interactive website.

"Norene was the kosher Julia Child of Canada," Reisman continued. "She had a drive and zest for life comparable to none. I will miss her Facebook posts always following the latest food trends."

Gilletz is survived by her children and grandchildren, Jodi,Paul, Lauren and Camille Sprackman, Steven, Cheryl and Max Gilletz and Doug, Ariane, Sam and Zak Gilletz and her beloved Noreners, an affectionate name Gilletz's many Facebook followers called themselves. ■

John Syrtash
B. A. (Hon.), LL.B.

Associate
Garfin Zeidenberg LLP
Family Lawyer & Mediator
for 39 years

Mr. Syrtash is Senior Family Law Associate to Garfin Zeidenberg LLP, celebrating 39 years as a Family Law lawyer this year.

Suite 800, 5255 Yonge Street (at Norton) just north of Mel Lastman Square, Civic Centre Subway station, Toronto, ON M5G 1E6. John Syrtash can be reached at (416) 642-5410, Cell (416) 886-0359.

Toronto Homeowners thinking about separation? Don't wait until the Spring by John T. Syrtash

The following timely article is written by my guest columnist Orly Katz. Ms. Katz is a very talented Toronto real estate agent. Her analysis raises critical issues for homeowners who are contemplating separation from their spouses and who own a marital home: *"Do we sell now or wait until the Spring?" "What if my spouse says no? I need to leave. I can't wait until another successful housing market like 2017."* Every case is different. First, hire a *competent* marriage counsellor and try to reconcile. If that fails, then retain competent Counsel to force a sale. **Don't wait.** You may lose your share in the sudden increase in your home's equity, as predicted by Ms. Katz. You likely need "lead time" before the Spring market hits to ensure your ability to settle issues with your spouse before a sale. With or without Counsel, you will likely need a Separation Agreement drafted by your lawyer and sometimes Court action. Such agreements take time because of the legal requirement for the exchange of transparent financial disclosure, such as banking documents and the valuation of certain assets, such as business interests.

Spring Housing Forecast 2020 by Orly Katz, Sutton Group Admiral Realty Inc.

The GTA housing market is looking up. The Toronto Real Estate Board (TREB) predicts over 10.5% climb in sales and prices. We are already seeing signs of a strong spring market. Carolyn Wilkins, senior deputy governor of the Bank of Canada notes *"Many of the same ingredients that were present in some housing markets three years ago- namely strong underlying demand, tight supply and low interest rates are present again."*

While there are many ingredients for a strong sellers' market here are just a few:

1) **Lack of Supply** – Low inventory with continued demand resulting in multiple offers. Normally in January there are over 11,000 listings in the GTA. January 2020 started with only 7,000 listings. With every January usually being a "slow" month, this year we are already seeing bidding wars.

2) **Low Borrowing Costs** – The Big Five Banks have already started to lower their mortgage rates. The Government just announced that it will likely loosen the restrictions on mortgage stress tests, making it easier to obtain mortgages. That combined with the government's initiative to help new homebuyers with share equity mortgages is another positive sign.

3) **Vibrant Labour Market** – low unemployment rate

4) **Strong Canadian Economy**

5) **Population Growth combined with strong immigration numbers.**

All of these factors are combined to make for a strong spring market in the GTA. Sellers could be seeing sunny skies all the way to the bank!!

Orly Katz

Visit www.freemychild.com; www.spousalsupport.com; www.garfinzeidenberg.com.

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Jewish Toronto restaurateur fights racism

JEREMY YUDIN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Toronto restaurateur David Brown was reading the newspaper when he spotted a story about a flower shop near his own restaurant. Flower shop owner Andy Sue, who is of Asian descent, was dealing with racism and harassment relating to the coronavirus.

Brown felt inclined to do something about it, so he immediately put up a Facebook post, offering a free burger to anyone who bought something from the flower shop over the upcoming weekend. Brown runs "Fearless Meat," a popular burger place in Toronto's Upper Beaches neighbourhood.

"What can I do to help this guy out?" he said. "Maybe it's a Jewish value ingrained in me, I don't know. It just seemed like the right thing to do."

Brown even hired extra staff to prepare for the bombardment of customers.

"You know, I wasn't sure how many people would come," he said. "It was probably one of our busiest days in terms of the number of people that came through here (though) it was snowing and miserable out weather wise. It was just like a wave after wave of people," he said.

David Brown, left, and Andy Sue JEREMY YUDIN PHOTO

Sue said he appreciated Brown's actions: "We were completely overwhelmed by the support from our community and abroad. People came from more than hour away outside of the city, just to come into the store and show their support, and their stance on racism."

Brown gave away between 700 to 800 burgers, "I thought maybe (we'd give out) around 50!"

As for Sue, he sold everything he had. "David's original goal was to get us sold out and we were sold out right to the walls."

"I can honestly say I found out about (what Brown was doing) the same way everyone else did online. And I was immediately blown away by what he did. It was truly amazing. Like, nowhere did I think this was going to happen to me."

The next morning, CBC reached out to Brown and he was on national news later that night. Global and CTV followed the next day.

"I saw that Andy had seen this because he put one of those 'like' symbols beside what I had posted," Brown said. "And I knew that he had seen it, but I don't think he was aware what was happening with it."

Last time Brown checked, his Facebook post has reached over 193,000 people.

The 66-year-old butcher is no stranger to giving away free food. Veterans and their spouses can walk into Fearless Meat anytime for free ice cream and coffee. Brown also gave out free burgers throughout the whole week of Remembrance Day.

Brown grew up in Ripley near Kincardine, Ont., as a member of the only Jewish family in the small community. Brown is also a landlord and developer who has worked with organizations such as Fred Victor dealing with affordable housing. ■

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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
FEBRUARY 27, 2020

Hasidim are adhering to Quebec law, lawyers say

JANICE ARNOLD
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In their final arguments in a civil case brought by two former Tash members, lawyers for the Quebec government and Hasidic Tash community refuted that children in that community or other Hasidic communities are not being educated in the province's compulsory curriculum.

The nine-day landmark trial in Quebec Superior Court wound up on Feb. 19 with the lawyer for Tash, David Banon, arguing against the applicability of the declaratory judgment sought by Yochonon Lowen, 42, and Clara Wasserstein, 41.

The married couple want the court to declare that the Tash schools they attended as children operated, and still operate illegally.

They also want the court to declare that the Quebec government, in tolerating this situation, is violating its legal obligations. They are not seeking monetary damages.

Justice Martin Castonguay is not expected to render a decision for several months.

Banon argued that the plaintiffs' lawyer Bruce Johnston did not provide any substantial evidence that Tash or any other Hasidic community is running illegal schools or that any Hasidic children are being denied instruction in the mandatory subjects.

On the contrary, Banon said defence testimony has proven the Hasidic communities are abiding by the law today and that Quebec has introduced legislation in recent years that has made it impossible for them to do otherwise.

Since the adoption of Bill 144 in 2017 by the Liberal government and its strengthening last year by the Coalition Avenir Quebec (CAQ) government, all Tash and other Hasidic children in Montreal who are not attending a legally recognized school are registered in a homeschooling program with the local school board.

Of the close to 6,000 children currently being homeschooled in Quebec, almost half are Hasidic, the court heard. As of December, 838 children in the Tash community are enrolled. Tash is a community of about 700 families in Boisbriand, about 30 kilometres north of Montreal.

Banon said since 2018 the Tash community has "collaborated enthusiastically" with education officials to comply with the law and that feedback from all sides has been positive.

Yochonon Lowen and Clara Wasserstein are seen at the Montreal courthouse where their case against the government and former Tash community was heard. JANICE ARNOLD PHOTO

He noted that parents attended all information meetings in 2019 with board officials and that the parents find them "helpful, kind and understanding" in providing an education respectful of their way of life.

There remains disagreement on the teaching of sex and some aspects of science, Banon said, but the community is receptive to the board and education ministry's pedagogical guidance.

The Hasidic students in Montreal are supervised by the English Montreal School Board (EMSB) and those in Boisbriand by the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board (SWLSB).

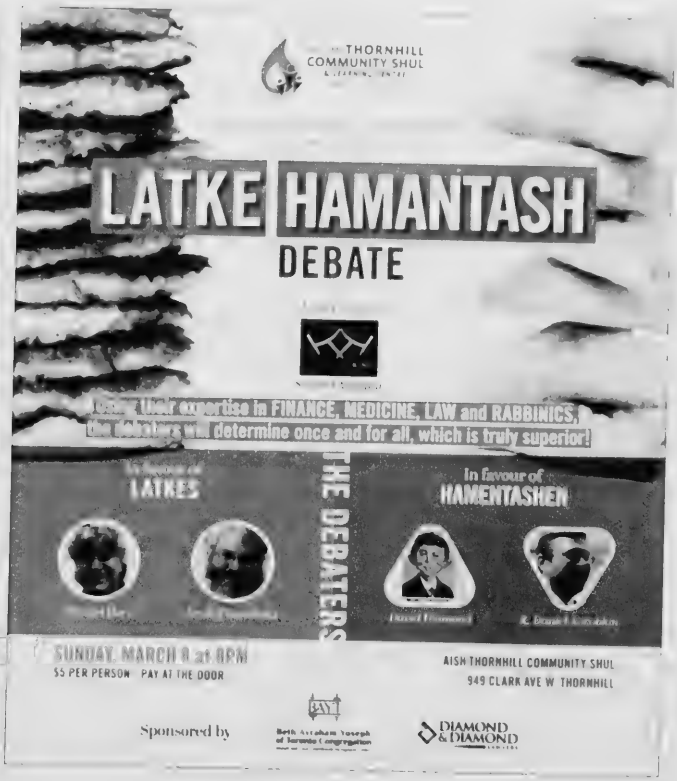
Defence witnesses from the SWLSB and the Education Ministry testified that the arrangement with Tash is, overall, working well and the children's progress is satisfactory.

The board has three consultants working specifically with the Tash schools, it was said.

Homeschooling became an alternative for the Hasidim in 2014 when the Education Ministry reached an out-of-court settlement with the Satmar community that avoided the closure of its boys' school. In 2011, a Superior Court judge ruled the school was operating illegally.

Bill 144, which went into effect in 2018, established clear regulations for the enforcement of school attendance, either in a legal school or recognized homeschooling program. Amendments made by the CAQ set even higher standards. Quebec today is said to have the most stringent homeschooling rules in North America.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



Yochonon Lowen

Johnston argued that, in practice, this is not the case. Tash boys, he said, continue to attend religious schools where the language of instruction is Yiddish from early in the morning until evening, leaving them little time or energy for secular studies.

He also questioned the qualifications of parents whose own education was lacking and who often have several children.

Johnston alleged at least two Tash schools do not have a permit to operate. He cited one of his witnesses, a school director, who testified that she did not know what was taught in the school.

Lowen and Wasserstein's suit alleges the laws being violated are the Education Act, the Act Respecting Private Education, the Charter of the French Language, and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Johnston said his clients are asking the court to pronounce on whether the schools at this moment are in conformity with the law or not.

Tash lawyer Banon cited in particular the testimony of Abraham Ekstein, president of the Association for Jewish Homeschooling. He stressed that Torah and Talmud study aids in the development of children's minds, sharpening their memory and analytical skills. They are more receptive to learning in general.

Ekstein allowed that boys are receiving much more of this kind of religious instruction, but girls are, on the other hand, getting more secular education in their schools.

Moreover, he said Hasidic children do not have phones, television or movies occupying their time.

Banon stressed that Hasidic communities today are eager to work with the authorities to find ways of reconciling their beliefs with the education the government mandates.

The lawyer for the Quebec government, Eric Cantin, presented an article-by-article description of Bill 144 to show that the law has sufficient teeth to enforce compulsory school attendance for children aged 6 to 16 and parents' fulfilment of homeschooling requirements. This includes inspections that permit authorities to enter any place, including private homes, to assess the situation.

The amendments that came into effect last July have strengthened minimal teaching and evaluation requirements, including the writing of provincial exams.

Moreover, he said 2017 modifications to the youth protection act mandate its departments to intervene anywhere if there is reason to believe a child's welfare, including educational rights, is at risk.

Johnston's firm, Trudel Johnston & Lespérance took on the case of Lowen and Wasserstein in 2016 as one "in the public interest." The couple, who married as teenagers and have four children, left Tash in 2010.

They claim their lack of even a basic secular education has made it difficult to find employment and that they have depended on welfare to live. ■

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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
FEBRUARY 27, 2020

Vancouver surgeon co-authors landmark textbook

LAUREN KRAMER
PACIFIC CORRESPONDENT, VANCOUVER

The medical textbook *Gray's Anatomy* came out in 1858 and is still a staple on medical bookshelves the world over. But it's not that helpful when it comes to surgical anatomy, a gap Dr. Sam Wiseman noticed and was determined to correct.

"Four years ago, I became aware that there wasn't a single go-to reference for surgical trainees," said Wiseman, a Jewish surgeon who works at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver. "There was an educational gap that needed to be filled, so I contacted the publishers with my idea."

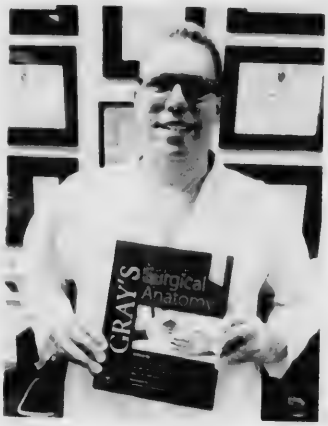
There's a crucial difference between regular anatomy and surgical anatomy, he explained. "Regular anatomy books focus on normal anatomy, the structure of the body as it exists in an undisturbed form. Surgical anatomy focuses on the anatomy the surgeon encounters during operations, when the normal location and orientation of anatomical structures is changed, and there are distortions in the normal anatomy that occur due to an underlying condition being treated."

Wiseman recently co-authored *Gray's Surgical Anatomy*, a 653-page surgical textbook that was published in November 2019. Working with co-editors Peter Brennan and world-renowned anatomist Susan Standring, they assembled contributions from hundreds of medical experts from around the world, including Wiseman's father, Nathan, a Winnipeg physician who contributed to the section on pediatric surgery.

Gray's Surgical Anatomy was three years in the making and Wiseman had to juggle his surgery and patient duties at multiple hospitals with his editorial work. "As the co-lead editor, I developed the structure of the book and made decisions on content, layout, proofing and reviewing of every chapter," he said.

His duties also included selecting editors and contributing authors, and he contributed chapters on conducting surgery on the thyroid and parathyroid glands, which is his specialty.

The result is a one-of-a-kind educational resource and a reference for trainees and surgeons that's already being snapped up from bookshelves the world over.



Dr. Sam Wiseman

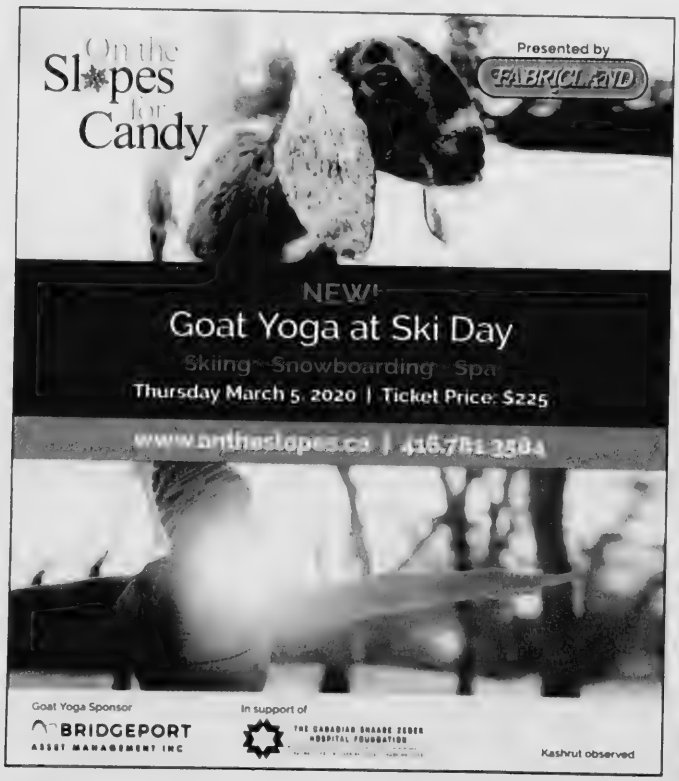
"There are lots of books about anatomy available, but until now, I'm not aware of any contemporary books that cover the entire gamut of the human body, head to toe, being utilized by trainees and surgeons as a reference," Wiseman said.

"This book takes an educational, practical approach for trainees and surgeons and we review not just general anatomy, but surgical anatomy – the anatomy around common surgical procedures that surgeons encounter in the operating room."

Gray's Surgical Anatomy comes with additional online multimedia content, including multiple choice questions and answers, discussions of clinical cases, additional photographs and access to video resources.

Wiseman has been gratified to receive messages from physicians in New Zealand, Europe, the Middle East and all over North America, commending him on the usefulness of the book.

"My co-editors were fantastic to work with, as were all the other section editors," he said. "I actually miss working with them on this project, and I'm already looking forward to the second edition. There's always room for growth and development and just like any textbook in its first edition, this one will continue to grow and evolve." ■



Trying to balance beliefs with clients' wishes

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

SHUTTERSTOCK PHOTO

"Our approach, which we saw as both respectful and in alignment with our traditional Jewish values, was very much what other faith-based homes were doing," Cohen said in an interview.

Hillel Lodge will refer patients who want to be assessed for MAiD, but so far the issue has not arisen. Putting the policy in the resident handbook helps patients consider a variety of important end-of-life issues, he said.

Other Jewish homes, including the Saul and Claribel Simkin Centre in Winnipeg, the Donald Berman Jewish Eldercare Centre and the Donald Berman Maimonides Geriatric Centre in Montreal, permit MAiD.

In Toronto's Baycrest, Canada's largest Jewish elder care complex, MAiD is permitted in the Apotex Centre Jewish Home for the Aged and the Terraces retirement residences (independent assisted living), but not in its hospital. Patients in the hospital would be transferred for MAiD, a situation that has not arisen, according to a statement from Baycrest.

"Baycrest balances our Jewish faith-based principles with a client-centred approach that respects the client's right of self-determination, while also adhering to applicable legislation," said the statement.

Advocates of MAiD argue that allowing faith-based institutions to opt out of providing the procedure is dangerous.

While individuals have the right to conscientiously object to MAiD, "bricks and mortar can't," said Dr. Jonathan Reggler, a MAiD provider and a board member of Dying With Dignity Canada.

"That an organization can (prohibit MAiD) is abhorrent, given the consequences I have seen."

Transferring terminally ill people out of the nursing home can cause them to lose the capacity to consent to MAiD before the procedure. In some instances, patients will refuse painkillers, although the transfer may be quite difficult, to preserve their ability to consent to the procedure, he said.

Waiting lists for nursing home beds can be long, and patients and their families can feel as if they have no choice but to accept any placement, even if the home does not permit MAiD. In many cases, patients are not aware of the policy until the time comes when they need it, Reggler said.

Eventually, Reggler believes, a court case will force all publicly-funded institutions, including faith-based ones, to provide MAiD. Reggler was involved in one case where the family was considering going to court, but the patient was so sick, they wouldn't live long enough to get an emergency injunction, he said.

Institutions that receive public funding, which would include almost every health-care facility in Canada, have an obligation to provide MAiD, he believes.

"For organizations to prohibit MAiD on their sites, when they are serving the general public, is disgraceful."

Rabbi Chaim Strauchler, who leads Toronto's Orthodox Shaarei Shomayim synagogue, is as staunch as Reggler is, but he opposes MAiD, calling it "murder."

"This is a person administering a drug that will kill someone. Whatever Orwellian language we use for it, it still is what it is," he said in an interview.

Rabbi Strauchler was an outspoken critic of MAiD before the legislation was passed, crafting a petition signed by more than two dozen other rabbis that pointed out what he saw as the pitfalls of the proposed law.

Since then, his concerns about MAiD have been realized, he said.

"In speaking to families, I've had a number of families tell me about well-meaning medical conversations that led them to feel pressured to consent to MAiD," he said.

Families see their parents "being invited into dying," a situation he says is "immoral."

The law has also placed physicians in an untenable position, he says. The Ontario College of Physicians and Surgeons recognizes a physician's right to conscientiously object to MAiD, but requires them to refer patients to a health-care worker who can assess them. That policy was challenged as unconstitutional and was upheld by the Ontario Court of Appeal in 2019.

Physicians in his congregation have told Rabbi Strauchler "they feel pressure seeing their institutions providing (MAiD) in ways that are wrong."

Some Jewish physicians have joined a campaign, supported by Christian religious organizations, that calls for physicians who have a conscientious objection to MAiD to be removed from the responsibility to refer patients.

The solution, Rabbi Strauchler said, is not to broaden the reach of MAiD, as the government's consultations indicate may happen, but to make palliative care more accessible and improve funding for it.

"Suffering at the end of life is very real," Rabbi Strauchler says. "Palliative experts are able to care for the pain."

The problem of doctors feeling compelled to participate in MAiD was one that the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) also flagged when it testified before a parliamentary committee shortly before the law was passed.

CIJA acknowledged at the time that there was no consensus on the issue within the Jewish community, something that has not changed in the intervening years.

"We remain concerned about the coercive element that effectively forces individual health-care providers to be engaged in a process regarding which they have conscientious or religious objections, and we will continue to relay those concerns to government," CIJA CEO Shimon Koffler Fogel said in a statement to *The CJN*.

Rabbi Jordan Cohen, a Reform rabbi at Temple Anshe Sholom in Hamilton, Ont., once also opposed MAiD, but as he saw members of his own congregation choose MAiD, his opinion changed.

Before MAiD became law, Rabbi Cohen said he took a traditionalist view. "I would say we are prohibited from doing anything that would take a life." Then, all of a sudden, the issue "became real" when three members of the synagogue opted for medical assistance in dying.

"These were people who lived strongly connected Jewish lives, but they were also suffering. It wasn't an easy out, nobody approached it lightly," Rabbi Cohen said.

In the end, after reviewing the rabbinic literature on the topic and the Canadian law, he changed his mind.

In the sermon he delivered on Yom Kippur in 2017, he told his congregation exactly that.

"I believe in the sanctity of life. As such, I support the right to die well — or at least as well as possible," he told his congregants. "When death is inevitable within a short time frame and suffering is unavoidable, those who are in a position to do so should assist a person who wishes to die to do so, with compassion and dignity. Whether one chooses that option or not is a matter of personal choice." ■

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INTERNATIONAL

South Koreans flown home over virus concerns

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF
TEL AVIV

South Korean tourists wear masks as they as they wait for the departure of their flight at Ben Gurion International airport on Feb. 24.
FLASH90 PHOTO

On Monday South Korean visitors were reportedly leaving Israel en masse amid coronavirus concerns after the number of cases mounted in the East Asian country and a day after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered that all South Koreans in Israel be quickly flown out of the country.

Israel's Foreign Ministry on Sunday urged Israelis not to visit Japan and South Korea over fears of exposure to the COVID-19 virus, and also recommended that Israelis currently in South Korea consider leaving the country.

The development on Monday came a day after the Health Ministry said South Korean tourists recently in Israel had tested positive for the coronavirus, sending hundreds of Israelis who were in proximity to the travelers into home quarantine.

The South Korean tourists were diagnosed upon returning home. According to Seoul, 29 of the pilgrims tested positive for the virus.

South Korea confirmed Monday 70 more novel coronavirus cases nationwide, bringing its tally to 833, by far the largest national total outside China. The updated figures on the website of the Korea Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC) brought the country's daily increase to 231, its highest to date.

Israel has two confirmed cases of the disease within its borders. Both were passengers on the Diamond Princess cruise that saw a massive outbreak of the virus and who has been kept under quarantine at a hospital along with nine other Israelis who were on the cruise.

The Israel Airport Authority (IAA) said in a statement Monday morning that 622 Korean nationals had left the country since Sunday night, and that between 800 and 900 still remained in the country.

Many had arrived at Ben Gurion Airport, where they were forced to spend the night after they were rejected by hotels and by residents of a settlement near Jerusalem where they were supposed to be quarantined on an adjacent army base.

Airport staff tried to help the Koreans by providing them with mattresses, food and water. They also helped them get tickets for one of several flights to Seoul arranged especially to return the Koreans back home that will then refuel and return – empty – to Israel to fly more travelers to South Korea.

El Al was asked by authorities to operate the flights after Korean Air suspended its flights to the Jewish state.

Passengers had to undergo medical examinations six to eight hours before their flight to establish that they hadn't caught the virus.

Flight attendants were told not to hand out meals during the flights, and the food would be pre-placed next to each seat. The attendants were to stay in the business class section throughout the flight, with one of them passing through the economy class area once every 30 minutes to check all was OK safety-wise. Garbage was collected only at the end of the flights.

One of the Koreans who spent the night at the airport told the *Ynet* news website: "We don't understand Israel's treatment of us. We know there are fears and we really want to go home, but we are not lepers."

On Monday, Israel also banned all foreign nationals who have been to South Korea and Japan in the past 14 days from entering the country. Israel is already denying entry to visitors from China, Hong Kong, Macau, Thailand and Singapore, and is apparently the only country to have taken such drastic steps so far to contain the virus.

Israeli citizens returning from South Korea and Japan or who were there in the last 14 days must quarantine themselves at home for two weeks upon their return, the ministry said.

The Israeli embassies in Seoul and Japan will continue operations as usual, it said.

South Korea's president said Sunday that he was putting his country on its highest alert for infectious diseases and ordered officials to take "unprecedented, powerful" steps to fight a soaring viral outbreak.

Foreign Minister Israel Katz called an emergency meeting at his ministry over the possible ramifications of the case of the South Koreans visitors.

In a statement, Katz said he'd instructed ministry officials "to support any strict decisions issued by the Health Ministry on preventing the entry of foreigners from various world countries who could pose a health risk to Israel's population."

"Our main consideration is the health of Israeli residents and preserving Israel's ability to maintain and grow ties with countries around the world, as a state that adheres to strict rules and has not been touched by the coronavirus," the statement added.

Some 200 students and teachers were ordered Saturday to self quarantine after it emerged that they had crossed paths with the group of Korean pilgrims earlier this month, and steps were being taken to identify others who may have come into the contact with them in Israel and the West Bank.

The revelation sparked intense worries of an outbreak here.

"This is really troubling ... there's a real danger that the virus will spread in Israel," Shai Ashkenaiz, the head of the pediatricians union and an expert on contagious diseases, told the *Ynet* news site.

Several global hotspots have begun to emerge as the virus spreads, from Iran to Italy, leading authorities to take stricter measures at their borders.

China also reported hundreds of more infections for a total of more than 79,000, and on Monday Iran raised its death toll from the virus to 50 – the highest toll outside of China. While the number of patients worldwide is increasing, some virus clusters have shown no link to China and experts are struggling to trace where those clusters started. ■

Timesofisrael.com

Analysis

Gantz investigation further muddies election waters

Raoul Wootliff
JERUSALEM

Following a 38-year career in the army, in 2015, former chief of staff Benny Gantz became the chairman of a Tel Aviv-based cybersecurity company called Fifth Dimension, which developed artificial intelligence solutions for law enforcement agencies. In December 2018, after just three years, the company went bankrupt, having burned through millions of dollars from investors.

"I can't consider the Fifth Dimension to be a success story," Gantz admitted in an interview last year, in the face of harsh criticism from Benjamin Netanyahu. The prime minister sniped that the Blue and White chairman, his chief political rival, could not be trusted to manage the State of Israel, having failed in his very first business venture.

"It was only one of eight or nine business activities I had. I'm not some tycoon and I don't consider myself a businessman," Gantz said in the interview, to the *Ynet* news site. "I propose we remember that this happens to nine out of 10 high-tech companies. So let's look at this with the proper perspective."

On Thursday, Feb. 20, the question of the appropriate perspective with which to look at Gantz's failed company became one of the most pressing of the current election campaign – the third in a year – when Acting State Attorney Dan Eldad ordered a criminal probe into Fifth Dimension over allegations of impropriety in its efforts to secure a lucrative contract with the Israel Police.

Netanyahu, who is due to appear in court as a criminal defendant over charges of bribery, fraud, and breach of trust just two weeks after the national vote, said in response to the announcement, "The public must know the truth, here and now, and before the elections."

Announced just 11 days before the election, the investigation further muddies the already swampy political waters, with the timing blurring a clear view of the company, the allegations against it, and the "truth" that Netanyahu is demanding.

The suspicions against Fifth Dimension focus, first, on a NIS4 million (C$1.5million) grant given to the firm by the police for a pilot project using the firm's ostensible tech capabilities, after company executives allegedly provided law enforcement officials with misleading information. The preliminary grant was intended to become part of a NIS50 million (C$19 million) contract. That contract was not finalized.

According to a state comptroller's report released shortly before the April 2019 election, the Israel Police negotiated the NIS4 million grant with the cybersecurity company without issuing a tender, in violation of acquisition regulations.

An election campaign billboard in Tel Aviv on Feb. 24 shows Blue and White Leader Benny Gantz. FLASH90 PHOTO

Fifth Dimension, the report found, told the Israel Police's acquisition committee in 2016 that it was founded four years earlier, instead of three; said it had an already-developed product, when it did not; and said that it had five clients – all security organizations – when it did not have any at the time.

The report, which focused on alleged police impropriety rather than suspicions against the company itself, faulted the force for approving the Fifth Dimension pilot project without a tender, and for later entering into negotiations with the firm for the NIS50 million contract without taking offers from any other companies.

"Police should have reached out to other technology companies, whether startups or veteran firms, and informed them of its intention" to sign a contract for technology services worth NIS50 million, then-comptroller Yosef Shapira wrote.

The report also faulted police for including Gantz and the CEO of Fifth Dimension, Doron Cohen, in a meeting early in their deliberations, as well as for giving the firm access to extensive information on its operations as part of the pilot project.

It said then-police commissioner Roni Alsheich was the driving force behind the project and that he ordered negotiations be held with Fifth Dimension, whose executives also included several former Israel Police brass.

After the pilot was determined to have been successfully completed in September 2017, police earmarked NIS 50 million for the project in its 2017-2018 budget. But the negotiations fell through when Finance Ministry officials said police would need to conduct a "thorough market review" in order for it to recommend that the contract be exempted from a public tender process.

Soon after, Fifth Dimension declared bankruptcy when its largest investor Viktor Vekselberg, a Russian businessman with ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin, was sanctioned by the United States for his connection to "malign activity" by the Russian government around the globe.

While Gantz has not been named as a suspect in the affair, Thursday's announcement of the probe – coming so close to the election and during a campaign by Blue and White that has tried to focus attention on Netanyahu's indictment for corruption charges – has raised a number of questions about the acting state prosecutor's timing and potential political motivation. Gantz himself, while insisting he has nothing to hide and will fully co-operate with the investigation, has claimed that a "political aroma" hangs over the affair.

Law enforcement and state prosecution officials have directed severe criticism at Eldad for his speedy decision to order the criminal probe – he was only named to the post this month – with several officials, speaking anonymously, accusing the interim head of Israel's state prosecution of being a lackey of the ruling Likud party.

One senior state prosecution official told the *Haaretz* daily that Eldad was behaving as "the justice minister's lackey" and a "*consigliere*" — an adviser to a mafia boss.

Another said: "We've become Turkey. Eldad is turning the prosecution political."

At the same time, Blue and White officials have accused Eldad and Justice Minister Amir Ohana – an ally of Netanyahu's and the force behind the appointment of Eldad (a move that angered other top justice officials and was initially opposed by Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit) – of leaking reports of the investigation before it became public. Ohana has said the probe should have been opened months ago.

Mandelblit's office on Thursday said that it had given the green light to Eldad to open the investigation, but that the attorney general himself was not involved in the case or the decision, implying a possible rift within Israel's legal echelon.

By staying out of the investigation, Mandelblit, who oversaw the probes that led to Netanyahu's prosecution, is widely reported to be signaling that he does not regard the case as highly significant and does not see Gantz as a likely suspect.

Appointed to the position of attorney general by Netanyahu, it was Mandelblit who announced draft charges against the premier shortly before the April 2019 elections, and a full indictment shortly after September's round two.

The case, and the timing of the prosecution, made him a target of anger for many Netanyahu supporters.

Announcing the first ever decision to charge a sitting prime minister in November, Mandelblit said it was a "hard and sad day" for Israel to indict its leader. "The citizens of Israel, all of us, and myself, look up to the elected officials, and first and foremost to the prime minister," Mandelblit said. "Law enforcement is not a choice. It is not a matter of right or left. It's not a matter of politics."

Netanyahu – who claims the indictment against him is politically motivated, and blames the opposition, media, police and prosecutors of pressuring a "weak" attorney general, Mandelblit – denies any wrongdoing.

It is not clear if the probe into Fifth Dimension will move the needle in any way in the latest closely fought election. Although two polls released Sunday show that for the first time in this election cycle, Likud has overtaken Blue and White, as things stand, surveys predict neither Netanyahu nor Gantz will have a clear path to a majority after next week's vote.

But it is certainly an embarrassment and a major political irritant for Gantz, who has made ousting Netanyahu his main message and has sought to present a squeaky clean image in the face of the long-serving premier's graft charges. The attractions of lucrative chairmanships are clear, but evidently such roles can come with a political cost.

Given the controversy around both the allegations and the timing of the investigation, the affair also risks further undermining the image of Israel's already battered legal authorities. Until this month, they were accused of anti-Netanyahu bias; now, it is Gantz who is claiming that they are politicized. ■

Times of Israel/Timesofisrael.com

Jewish Life

Beautiful Stockholm through Jewish eyes

The Swedish capital has hardly any high-rise buildings. ERIKA LEVIANT PHOTO

ERIKA LEVIANT AND ELLA KAPLUN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN, STOCKHOLM

Summer days in the Swedish capital seem never ending. The sun refuses to set until around 10 p.m., leaving a romantic glow upon the city for the evening hours. It is a city made up of a string of 14 islands, most interconnected by bridges; the blue of the water and the green of the land fit together like irregular shaped pieces of a giant jigsaw puzzle.

Stockholm has a unique landscape, with barely any high-rise buildings, except for church spires that pierce the otherwise almost unobstructed skyline. Since Sweden was neutral during the Second World War, Stockholm was not touched by war and its old neighbourhoods are pristinely preserved. Low buildings in different shades of pastel colours inspired by many varied styles of architecture abut each other, especially in the Old Town, Gamla Stan.

To get around the city conveniently, we bought a Stockholm Pass, which can be purchased in advance (www.stockholmpass.com). It enabled us to hop on and off buses, visit museums, and take the always enjoyable ferry rides.

But besides touring, we also wanted to explore Stockholm's Jewish life here with its deep-rooted history. Although Sweden has the largest population of Jews in the Scandinavian countries, an estimated 20,000, 4,500 of whom live in Stockholm, it's a number minuscule compared to other European countries.

To learn more about Stockholm's Jewish past, we took a three-hour walking tour with our knowledgeable guide David Kay from Milk and Honey Tours. We started at our hotel, The Diplomat, a turn of the 20th century Art Nouveau building overlooking the Nybroviken Bay. We walked along the waterfront toward the Gamla Stan, where Jews were first officially allowed to settle in Sweden. Ferry boats lined the docks, and in the many bars and restaurants, including many vegetarian ones, people were relaxing after work, meeting friends and enjoying the summer sun.

During our walk, we crossed a bridge to Gamla Stan, an old harbour town built on a hill with the Royal Palace on top. As we were winding our way up narrow, cobbled streets, passing eye-catching storefronts, our guide told us a fascinating story:

In 1774, David Isaac, a wealthy gem merchant and seal engraver, was invited to settle in Stockholm by King Gustav III, to help finance his military expeditions. Unlike Jews who came to Sweden before him and accepted conversion for the privilege of staying, Isaac made it a condition for settling there that he be allowed to practise as a Jew. He also insisted that he bring with him other Jewish families so a congregation could be formed.

Our guide then pointed out the middle storey of a three-storey apartment house where the first synagogue in Sweden had been housed. This building, just off the island's famous main square where the Nobel Museum is located, was recently purchased by the Jewish community to be converted into a Jewish museum.

Our tour ended by crossing to another island to see the magnificent Great Synagogue. Built in 1870 in a Moorish-inspired style, it is a testimony to the wealth and privilege the Jews attained by that time and the tolerant attitude of their adopted country. It is now a Conservative synagogue with a female rabbi.

As if to repay their welcome to Sweden, since settling there Jews have contributed to the cultural and economic life of Sweden.

The elegant department store MKon, in the centre of Stockholm, was established by the Saks family, who also owned the famous Saks Fifth Avenue department store in New York. The renowned publishing house, Bonniers, founded in 1831, is still important in the literary life of this country. Stockholm's Great Concert Hall was built by the textile merchant Isaac Hirsch, and the city hall itself was largely financed by Jewish donors. But because of intermarriage and assimilation many of these old families are no longer Jewish; however, they still continue to support Jewish causes.

But today the climate for Jews has changed here. Sweden is no exception to the rise of anti-Semitic incidents worldwide. Recent news reports told of harassment, intimidation, and attacks on Jews in Malmo, Gothenburg and other towns.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

In Sweden, anti-Semitism has found oxygen both among white supremacists on the far right and Israel-bashers on the far left.

Nevertheless, Jewish life goes on, albeit on a reduced scale. We spoke with a local high school senior, Eliot, involved in the Jewish Youth Organization, the only such group in Sweden. He told us that for him, as for many of his peers, Glamsta, the only overnight Jewish summer camp, was his most important experience in maintaining his Jewish identity.

Located in Stockholm's picturesque archipelago, this small camp attracts children from all over Sweden. "This was the first time I was involved with Shabbat rituals," Eliot said, "and it made me proud to be Jewish. In this camp you also become part of a close-knit community of young Jews."

Another important institution that helps to keep the community together is the *Bajit* (House), a Jewish cultural community centre built in 2016. It houses the Hillel school, the only Jewish day school in Sweden, with 360 students in classes from kindergarten to sixth grade, and it also sponsors many cultural events. Like all schools in Sweden, including universities, this one is also tuition free.

Eye-catching storefronts along narrow cobbled streets. ERIKA LEVIANT PHOTO

Although most Swedish Jews hesitate to show any identifiable sign of their religion, the Chabad rabbi of Stockholm walks around with a kippah. Chabad is located on the island of Sodermalm, formerly a working-class neighbourhood that gentrified into a kind of Soho, with vintage and antique shops, art galleries and ethnic restaurants. Chabad holds an Orthodox minyan, hosts Shabbat and holiday meals, houses a kindergarten, and is a gathering place for youngsters. Chabad also offers bar/bat mitzvah lessons and Jewish studies, and caters to tourists by delivering kosher meals to their hotels.

Stockholm's Great Synagogue is not only a historical landmark, as in many other places in Europe, but also a functioning one. One Shabbat morning during our stay we witnessed a double bat mitzvah.

One of the celebrants was a local girl, the other from New York, who chose to celebrate this important occasion in Stockholm because she and her family are active in Paideia, a Swedish-based organization dedicated to the revival of Jewish culture in Europe. Both girls read from the Torah, their young voices ringing out in this soaring historical interior which can easily seat 900 people. On that Shabbat fewer than a hundred attended, but these young voices were the hope for the continuation of Swedish Jewish life. ■

Erika Leviant has written travel pieces for newspapers and magazines in the United States and Canada. Her granddaughter, Ella Kaplun, is an English major at NYU.

MIRI BEN-ARI
MARCH 13, 2020

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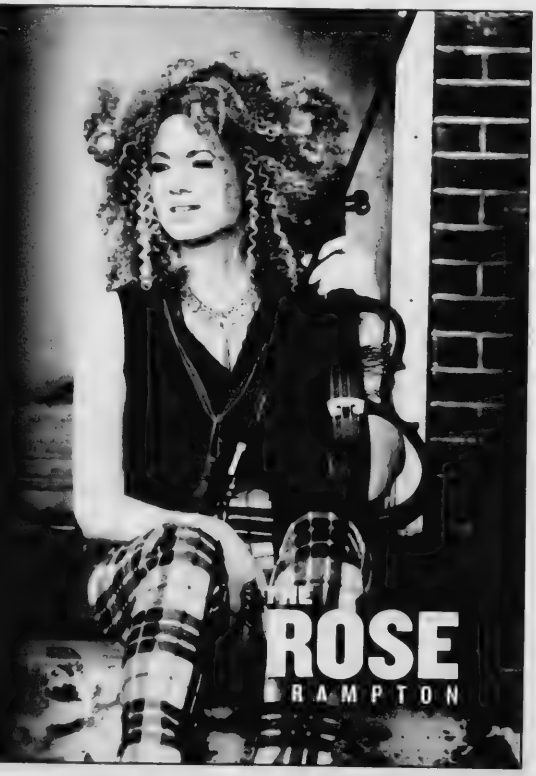

Enjoy an evening of Jewish storytelling

RUTH SCHWEITZER
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

A recent gathering of the newly revived Toronto Jewish Storytelling Guild at Congregation Habonim featured personal, historical and traditional tales told by some of the community's raconteurs.

The evening's storytellers included Meryl Arbing, Judith Cohen, Jane Enkin, Briane Nasimok, Eden Nameri, Norman Perrin, Nicholas Rice and Eli Rubenstein, the religious leader of Congregation Habonim.

Arbing told the story of Holocaust survivor, David "Dugo" Leitner. Leitner was 14 years old when he was sent on the three-day death march from Auschwitz, beginning on Jan. 18, 1945. His mother had told him about falafels, and he vowed he was going to keep going until he could get one. Eventually Leitner went to Israel and in a Jerusalem market, he ate a falafel. "Every year on the 18th of January, I'm going to have a falafel to remind me of what kept me alive," Leitner vowed.

That story spread throughout Israel and now tens of thousands of Israelis eat a falafel on Jan. 18 to celebrate their freedom.

Clockwise from top left, Briane Nasimok, Meryl Arbing, Judith Cohen, Eden Nameri, Norman Perrin and Jane Enkin

This year, 75 years after the liberation of Auschwitz, Leitner shared a falafel lunch with the IDF Chief of Staff, Lt.-Gen. Aviv Kochavi.

Eli Rubenstein recounted an anecdote told by the writer and Holocaust survivor Primo Levi, about the psychological torture prisoners endured at Auschwitz. Levi once reached for an icicle because his throat was dry. A Nazi guard stopped him, saying, "No, it's not allowed." Levi said, "But why?" The guard replied, "You're in Auschwitz and in Auschwitz there is no why."

Rubenstein said the story symbolizes what Auschwitz was. "It wasn't just a place of physical torture. It was a place of incredible emotional and psychological torture. They weren't just there to destroy them physically, they were out to crush their souls. Any place you can't ask why is a place you shouldn't be," he said.

Jane Enkin told one of preacher/storyteller Yitzhak Buxbaum's stories, about the Baal Shem Tov and Rabbi Moshe, who on a wintery day during Tu b'Shevat found a path leading to an orange grove deep in the woods.

Briane Nasimok's story was a joke-filled account about how he closed off emotionally from everyone, including his mother, after his father's death, and how he and his mother had re-established the bond by the end of her life.

Norman Perrin told a tale about a king who, while walking in disguise on the poorest street in the poor section of a city, thought to himself, "I will come and make this place a better place."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 35

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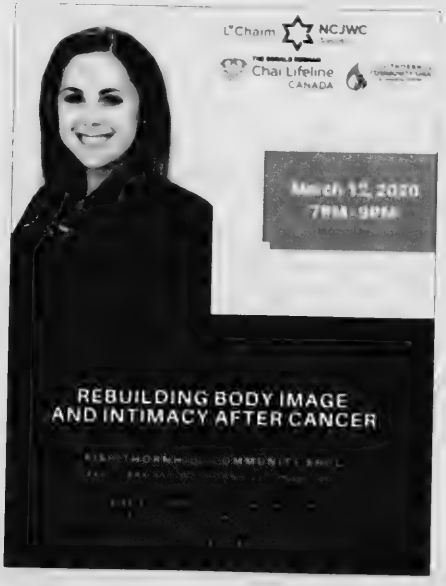


Food to boost your brain

BARBARA SILVERSTEIN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

There are so many health and nutrition books in the market these days. Usually the books are written by physicians or other health professionals and the recipe sections are tacked on at the end.

It often seems like the recipe pages are fillers. Nobody buys these health books for the recipes.

But now there's a new health-cookbook on the market, with recipes that have equal billing to the science.

The Brain Boosting Diet: Feed Your Memory is a collaborative work between nutritional scientist, and food maven, Edward Wein, and Norene Gilletz, a former columnist at *The CJN* and the author of 12 cookbooks. Gilletz died on Feb. 23.

Gilletz understood ingredients and how to combine them to create tasty recipes. If there was such a thing as a PhD in recipe development, Gilletz would have been awarded that degree long ago.

Wein has provided her with the foods that best promote brain health and she created recipes using these nutritionally dense ingredients. Of course every recipe is kosher, which is one of the many unique features of *The Brain Boosting Diet*.

In the first 100 pages, Wein gives the science information about the foods that boost brain health but he also gives a nutritional analysis of every recipe.

There are more than 200 recipes, but in "Norene's Notes," Gilletz often provides alternative foods and ways of preparing the various dishes, so 200 is more like 300 or 400 recipes.

There's a whole section on fish because fish is "brain food," so to speak. The emphasis is on fresh ingredients. For instance, Gilletz offers 25 recipes for salads and salad dressings that include Asian style flavours.

The "Make-It-Meatless" chapter has crowd pleasers like Cauliflower-Crusted Pizza and Crustless Zucchini Quiche, along with a host of dairy-free and vegan options.

For carnivores, there are meat and chicken recipes like Sweet Potato Shepard's Pie, Hoisin Sesame Chicken, as well as Grilled Moroccan Chicken.

With theses recipes Gilletz has incorporated all kinds of herbs and spices to give the dishes' healthy ingredients lots of flavour. She has served up delicious recipes that also boost brain health. ■

Grilled Moroccan Chicken

- 6 boneless, skinless single chicken breasts (or 12 boneless, skinless chicken thighs)
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 3 cloves garlic (about 15 ml/1 tbsp) minced
- 45 ml (3 tbsp) minced fresh mint (see Norene's Notes)
- 15 ml (1 tbsp) minced fresh thyme
- 5 ml (1 tsp) ground cumin
- 5 ml (1 tsp) sweet paprika
- 2 ml (½ tsp) turmeric
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) olive oil
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) lemon juice (preferably fresh)

Lightly sprinkle the chicken breasts with salt and pepper and place them in a resealable plastic bag.

In a small bowl, combine the garlic, mint, thyme, cumin, paprika, turmeric, olive oil and lemon juice and mix them well. Pour this marinade over the chicken in the plastic bag, seal tightly, and shake the bag to coat all the sides. (The chicken can be prepared in advance up to this point and marinated up to two days in the refrigerator.)

Preheat the barbecue or grill. Remove the chicken from the marinade and drain well. Discard the marinade.

Grill the chicken over indirect heat, about 4 to 6 minutes per side, until grill marks appear and the juices run clear. (A two-sided indoor grill will cook in half the time of a gas or charcoal grill.) The chicken breasts will be done in 4 to 6 minutes total time, depending on their thickness. They will register at 74 C (165 F) on an instant-read thermometer. Makes 6 servings

Norene's Notes:

- Herb-alicious: Instead of mint, use coriander, basil, or parsley. If you don't have fresh herbs, substitute 5 ml (1 tsp) dried for 15 ml (1 tbsp) fresh.
- Variation: Instead of lemon juice, use orange, lime, or pomegranate juice.

Colourful Kale Salad

Dressing

- 60 ml (¼ cup) extra virgin olive oil
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) rice or apple cider vinegar
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) lemon, mango or orange juice
- 15 ml (1 tbsp) honey
- 2 ml (½ tsp) Dijon mustard
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Salad

- 1 medium bunch kale (about 500 g/1 lb)
- 15 ml (1 tbsp) extra virgin olive oil
- 125 ml (½ cup) diced red onion
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- 125 ml (½ cup) unsweetened dried cranberries (optional)
- 1 ripe Hass avocado
- 1 firm ripe mango
- 125 ml (½ cup) toasted sunflower seeds (for garnish)

To make the dressing, combine ingredients in a jar, cover tightly, and shake well. Store in the refrigerator until ready to use.

To make the salad, wash the kale and dry it thoroughly. Remove and discard the tough stalks and centre veins. Chop the kale into bite-sized pieces and place them in a large bowl.

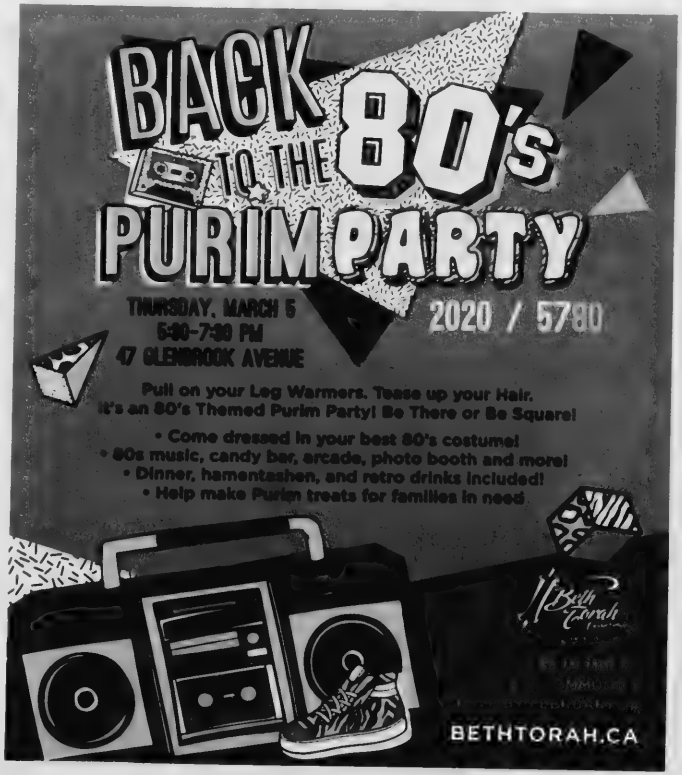
Using your fingertips, massage the kale with the oil for 2 to 3 minutes to break down the tough fibres (kale reduces a lot after being massaged). Add the onion, red pepper and cranberries, if using, but do not toss. Cover and chill.

Shortly before serving, peel, pit and dice the avocado and mango. Add them to salad. Drizzle with the dressing, and toss gently to combine. Sprinkle sunflower seeds over top. Makes 6 servings

Norene's Notes:

Green power: Kale is nutrient-packed and an excellent source of fibre and iron. This colourful salad also works well with spinach, leafy mixed greens, or your favourite salad greens.

- Make it a meal: Add sliced cooked chicken or turkey, or chunks of poached salmon.
- Passover option: Instead of rice vinegar, use white wine vinegar or lemon juice. Omit the mustard. Replace the sunflower seeds with toasted walnuts, pecans, pistachios, or slivered almonds.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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
FEBRUARY 27, 2020

A millennial adventure set during Rob Ford scandal

SUSAN MINUK
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Ricky Tollman, right, with film producer Randy Manis.

Actor Ben Platt, left, on set with Ricky Tollman DAVID LEYES PHOTO

The wildly anticipated movie *Run This Town* follows three millennials struggling to find their place in the world against the backdrop of the Rob Ford scandal that engulfed Toronto in 2013.

This is the directorial debut for writer/director Ricky Tollman, and is produced by Randy Manis and Jonathan Bronfman. The three-year project was filmed in Toronto in 20 days, shooting at landmarks such as Nathan Phillips Square, city chambers and the Thompson Hotel.

In the film, Tollman examines the relationship between news, politics and entertainment.

"With the surge in clickbait headlines and 140-character reporting, politics has shifted. What can get the most likes? It's entertainment," Tollman said. "I wanted to tell a story about people that took place in the walls of news, which has shifted over the last 10 or 12 years from binding fact check news to opinion and the most eyeballs."

Tollman said he writes about people he grew up with. "The aspects of these characters' lives are based on people that I know, but they are fictional."

In the film, we meet Bram Shriver (Ben Platt), who grew up in Jewish Toronto, and is a young intern working at a newspaper, relegated to making 'Top 10' lists in order to steer readers to his newspaper's website.

Through layoffs and chance, he gets word of a blistering political scandal – a leaked video involving Toronto's mayor, Rob Ford. As Bram works to break the story, political aides Kamal (Mena Massoud), and Ashley (Nina Dobrev) are at city hall fighting to bury it at the expense of their integrity.

"It's a film about millennial ambition and the pitting of young people against each other," Tollman said.

Tollman explores millennials' frustrations of feeling stuck. We see Platt's character rant about the constant pressure to do it all.

"I was choked up when Ben Platt delivered a speech on set that's very important for millennials to hear, but also for the older generations who don't really get it," producer Manis said.

Tollman says viewers, Toronto ones especially, may be surprised to see the iconic United Bakers Dairy Restaurant on screen.

"We were lucky our shoot happened to be over Passover when they closed," Tollman said. "The owner's son was on set that day – he was my camper at Camp Shalom. I was his drama counsellor who directed him in a camp play I wrote, so for him to see me directing a real movie was nice to share."

Bringing actor Damian Lewis to play Ford generated worldwide chatter. "We needed a specific actor that could be that politician. And Damian is charming and funny – but can also play shades of darkness in one moment and then in the next moment you can be laughing with him," Tollman said. "And you're not sure you should be laughing!"

Although the film is set during the Ford scandal, it isn't specifically "The Rob Ford story."

"He appears in just a handful of scenes it's really a jumping off point," Manis said. "I think that the portrait of Rob is sympathetic in that we definitely see multiple sides of him."

The Ford angle, Manis said, is "a way to explore our characters' lives and just what that story means to them at that time, because we thought it was empathetic of a lot of things in the world."

Throughout the course of the film, the millennials encounter issues such as immigration, gender politics, the changing landscape of media and sexual harassment in the workplace.

"I hope we start a conversation about some of the issues brought up in the movie," Tollman said.

The South African-born writer, director and producer grew up in Toronto obsessed with film, but admits he got lucky.

He began as an intern for Manis, an entertainment lawyer, producer and film executive with over 20 years of experience in every facet of independent film. Manis' producing credits include: Oscar-nominated films *Margin Call*, *The Ides of March* and *Murderball*.

"Ricky was hired to help me with administrative tasks a couple of times a week," Manis said. "It became clear that he really wanted to write and direct, so we would talk about ideas that he had. Eventually Ricky brought me something that excited me. Our relationship shifted to director and producer, and good friends." ■

Run This Town opens in theatres on March 6.

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Ve'ahavta

Guest Voice

Reflections on my first trip to Israel

Joan Yolleck

This was my first trip to Israel. "You'll love it," people said. "It's an amazing country." But I still didn't know what to expect.

I was travelling in December and they were calling for possible snow in the Golan Heights. On my first night in Tel Aviv, I crossed Kaufmann Street to get closer to the Mediterranean and to see the stars. A group of people were gathered in a circle playing drums. All of them were older, and this was my first surprise.

In Toronto, it is more often young people out in public on the streets. The worn faces told tales that young people could not. The drummers seemed deep in their own thoughts. I came to learn that, in Israel, everyone has a story.

One of the great highlights of my trip was the Western Wall. I never really imagined I'd ever see this holy site. It was smaller and more intimate than I expected. My small pieces of paper with prayers for friends and family were too big to wedge into the tiny cracks in the wall and the ground was layered with paper. I had heard the messages are put into boxes and buried.

Men and women were separated, and the men's side had a big menorah. On our side, women pressed their heads against the wall and some sat on plastic garden chairs, reading scripture. It was chaotic and uplifting, all at the same time. I'd love to go again to touch this ancient Temple remnant, built in the first century BCE. The wall didn't seem that old, since most of Jerusalem is built in the same stone, but it did feel eternal.

On Christmas Day, my tour took us to the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. We were there to see the possible place where Jesus had been born. It took us an hour and a half to reach a small door that opened into a tiny grotto. Once inside, the priests allowed us to kneel in a space under an altar where we could touch the spot that marked this Christian holy place.

On the way from Eilat to Jerusalem, our bus stopped in the Negev for refreshments. Shimon Raymond owned a small restaurant, a petting zoo and some rooms to let in the middle of the desert.

Joan Yolleck with Shimon Raymond, a.k.a. Koshi.

Raymond, nicknamed Koshi, was a war hero and sergeant, one of the original men in Unit 101, an IDF special forces unit formed in 1953 by Ariel Sharon on orders from David Ben-Gurion. Our guide told me that, after his service, Koshi had struggled with personal demons, but eventually found his way by opening this wayside stop. The instant I saw him, sitting in his worn leather chair by the fence near the parking lot, I knew he was someone important.

On the last day, one more must-do could not escape me. I had to have shawarma. My sister, Marthe, had spoken of it years ago when she worked in Israel on an archeological dig. I had to taste it. In Tel Aviv, I headed for Yashka Shawarma and, like the final bow on the gift that was Israel, I had an unforgettable meal.

At home, I saw fellow travellers' Facebook pictures. What I had experienced and seen was different from each of them. There are so many ways to experience Israel. My trip was as unique as the country itself. ■

Joan Yolleck's trip to Israel will not be her last. She is the author of the children's book Paris in the Spring With Picasso. *She lives in Toronto.*

Mazel tov, Bubbe Magdy and Zayde Ernie Strauss, on your 50th anniversary! May we continue to share milestones. Love, all your children and grandchildren

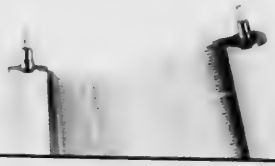
Mazel tov to my amazing wife, Leslie Viner, on your special birthday on March 2. May we celebrate many more birthdays together. With much love from Barry

Mazel tov to Ben and Julia Colinsky on your 68th anniversary and 92nd birthdays! Wishing you many more! Love, your family and friends.

Happy birthday to Steve Rothman, who turned 68 on Feb. 3. With lots of love from wife Vickie and your children and five grandchildren. Mazel tov and best wishes always.

Parashah

Terumah | Exodus 25:1-27:19



Josh Posel underscores the importance Judaism places on creating physical spaces of worship
Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl considers why Jewish law places such high value on human dignity
Rabbi Catharine Clark says each of us needs to pick our own path on the journey to be found by God

Josh Posel

Parashat Terumah details the building of the Tabernacle, its contents and the garments of the high priest. These were to be provided by voluntary donations of materials and artistic skills. This personalized commitment to construct the Tabernacle would allow God to "dwell among the Israelites." The incident of the Golden Calf made it clear the Israelites had forgotten this fact. Indeed, their distance from God paralleled their distance from Sinai.

Therefore, this parashah underscores the importance Judaism places on creating a physical place where we can worship God. It demonstrates the superiority of public communal prayer over praying privately at home. Even if God is in our hearts, we are still required to participate in public displays of devotion. Just as there are many details about the materials needed in the construction of the Tabernacle, there are many elements, both physical and spiritual, that go into building a synagogue or a Jewish community.

The haftarah's description of the Temple's construction highlights the chain of tradition connecting ancient places of worship to the modern synagogue. Donations provided material and skill to build the Tabernacle and the Temple. Today, voluntary payments of membership dues and/or donations of money and time are still essential to the sustaining of synagogues.

Unfortunately, nowadays, one of the necessary components of a synagogue's budget is security. As magnificent as we make our places of worship today, there are still those who try to destroy their sanctity, as evidenced by horrific events in Pittsburgh, Poway, Calif., and Germany. Rabbis across the world urged congregants to attend synagogue the following Shabbat after these tragic incidents to show solidarity. I was comforted to read and observe that sanctuaries all over the globe were overflowing on those Shabbatot, as we all came together to pray and show we are unafraid.

Am Yisra'el Chai! ■

Josh Posel is a Grade 11 student at TanenbaumCHAT in Toronto.

Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl

The visual and spiritual focus of synagogues throughout the world is the Holy Ark, sheltering the sacred Torah scrolls. Our "small sanctuary" draws on the precedence of the wilderness sanctuary, commissioned in this week's Torah portion. The biblical *Aron* (Ark) would house the material record of the covenant between God and the people of Israel and become the centre of future relations between them.

There is no biblical suggestion that the *Aron* held anything else. However, a talmudic tradition discloses something additional. The Babylonian sage Rav Yosef became ill and required care to remember forgotten subjects. Subsequent to this personal challenge, he stated that the shards of the tablets that had been shattered after the sin of the Golden Calf were also preserved in the Ark. No longer whole, they still retained sanctity. So too, taught Rav Yosef, a scholar, the embodiment of Torah, was to be treated with respect, even if his intellectual acuity or physical strength had failed.

Jewish law extended similar holiness and dignity to all people, for human beings are the icons of divinity on earth, bearing the imprint of God. Human life is of absolute value. "One who sheds human blood shall have his blood shed by humans, for in the image of God did God make humankind" (Genesis 9:6).

This coming week, on the seventh of Adar, we mark the death of Moses. Although "his eyes were undimmed and his vigour unabated" (Deuteronomy 34:7), others do not have easy deaths. Still, despite extreme circumstances – even when degraded by those who hated us – the sanctity of life remained absolute. Thus, we do not actively cause the end of life, even though we may remove impediments to the natural process of dying. Instead, our society should emphasize greater funding of palliative treatment, hospice care, appropriate pain control, symptom management and emotional support. If we fulfil our duty to care, then the sacred fragments of the arc of life will be carried on the journey of life in an ark of dignity and respect. ■

Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl is rabbi emeritus at Beth Tzedec Congregation in Toronto.

Rabbi Catharine Clark

Where is God? Parashat Terumah has an easy answer to that question: in the Mishkan (Tabernacle), which the Israelites made at God's command, so that God could dwell among them in the wilderness. The problem is that the Mishkan no longer exists. Finding God is harder than it once was.

In his book *Sacred Fragments: Recovering Theology for the Modern Jew*, Rabbi Neil Gillman writes that a good place to find God is through an experience of God, one that can be entirely inward, extremely vivid and utterly transformative, or that can be an intuitive sense of ordered harmony pervading all of reality and one's place in it. For those who have never had such an experience, Rabbi Gillman's answer is almost as frustrating and elusive as the idea that God is in the Mishkan.

But there are places to look. According to Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, God is, in fact, looking for us. Systematizing Rabbi Heschel's writing, Rabbi Gillman summarizes that God searches for us in creation, revelation and redemption. Each is its own GPS app for finding God.

In the natural world created by God, we can experience radical amazement. God is found in the night sky or at the birth of our children. In revelation, God seeks a relationship with us through Torah and the mitzvot. We find God through daily prayer, rest on Shabbat and the observation of kashrut laws. In redemption, God connects with us through history and good deeds. God is in the preservation of the Jewish people, against all odds, over millenniums. God is present when we help someone in need or when someone helps us.

The Mishkan that the Israelites began building in this week's parashah no longer stands. Each of us needs to pick our own path to being found by God. ■

Rabbi Catharine Clark is the spiritual leader of Congregation Or Shalom, a Conservative synagogue in London, Ont.

Social Scene

ICRF Presents: Hollywood Rock

TORONTO

The ICRF Presents: Hollywood Rock is a fan favourite event that featured professional musicians performing hits from Hollywood classic rock-themed movies including *Bohemian Rhapsody, Rocket Man, Yesterday, Blinded By The Light* and more! This year ICRF Presents introduced the Alisa Lyons Award of Valour to honour Alisa Lyons who passed away after a courageous battle with breast cancer. ■

Allan Lyons and Barbara Paikin

Event chairs Jeffrey Bly, Richard Flomen, Gillian Tessis and Norman Shiner

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MOSAIC PHOTOGRAPHY

For details on how to have an event featured in this page, e-mail: thesocialite@thecjn.ca

What's New

FEB. 27 - MARCH 5

by Lila Sarick

Tikvah club

Students from TanenbaumCHAT have started the Tikvah (Hope) Club at the school. High school students meet regularly with participants from Yachad, a group for people with special needs, to enjoy after-school social activities together.

Thursday, Feb. 27

SCIENCE MEETS THE BIBLE
Stephen Kraft discusses "The Akedah Code," Beth David, 7:30 p.m.

LESSONS FROM AN IDF SOLDIER
Izzy Ezagui, the first soldier to lose a limb in combat and return to the battlefield, speaks at 7:30 p.m., Adath Israel Congregation. Free for students. $25 for others. For tickets, visit eventbrite.ca.

Friday, Feb. 28

LESLIEVILLE SHABBAT
Leslieville Jewish School celebrates Kabbalat Shabbat with music and dinner, 6:30 p.m., Ralph Thornton Community Centre, 765 Queen St. E. Details: darcheinoam.ca/events.

Saturday, Feb. 29

ISRAELI ELECTIONS
Adults can learn about the Israeli elections, while children play an election game, 5:45-7:30 p.m., Darchei Noam.

Sunday, March 1

LEARN ABOUT CLASSICAL MUSIC
Classical DJ **Howard Mednick** discusses the work of "all-star composers," such as George Gershwin and Aaron Copland, last in a three-part series, at Congregation Darchei Noam, 7 p.m. $15. Tickets: darcheinoam.ca

PJ LIBRARY
PJ Library presents a Purim show, 10 a.m., Beth Tzedec. Free. RSVP: 416-781-3514 ext. 290.

Deadline:
The deadline for the March 12 paper is March 2. All deadlines are at noon. Phone: 416-391-1836 ext. 269; email: **whatsnewcjn@gmail.com**.

Monday, March 2

ROSH HODESH
The Song Shul's Rosh Hodesh group for women meets with **Aliza Spiro**, 11:30 a.m. Enjoy discussion, song and camaraderie. $10 for non-members. Contact info@songshul.com for venue.

Tuesday, March 3

TUESDAY STUDY GROUP
Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner is the guest speaker at a Women of Adath study group breakfast at 9:30 a.m. $10 for non-members. Info: **Marjorie**, 416-780-9156.

TUESDAYS WITH LARRY
Beth Tikvah shows the film *Anvil: The Story of Anvil*, 1:30 p.m., $5. Each film includes an introduction and commentary by **Larry Anklewicz**.

PHOTOS OF EASTERN EUROPE
Photographer **David Kaufman** documents and speaks about "Jewish Historical Sites in Poland and Western Ukraine," 7:30 p.m., Darchei Noam.

ISRAEL STAMP CLUB
The Israel Stamp Club discusses "The Designs of Ben-Dov, Yoresh, Grebu," 7 p.m. Call 416-226-2050 for location.

Wed., March 4

ISRAELI LITERATURE
Harriet Morris discusses *The Iron Tracks* by Aharon Appelfeld, 1:30 p.m., Beth Tikvah. $5/$10. Register at 416-221-3433.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY
Nadine Blum discusses "Women, Labour and Law," 7:30 p.m., Borochov Cultural Centre, 272 Codsell Ave. $15/$20. Sponsored by Na'amat Canada Toronto. Register at naamat.com/toronto or 416-636-5425.

Thursday, March 5

SCIENCE MEETS THE BIBLE
Stephen Kraft discusses "Kabbalah, Geometry and Modern Geography," 7:30 p.m., Beth David.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

SEX, VIOLENCE IN THE MEGILLAH
Rabbi Denise Handlarski of Oraynu Congregation for Humanistic Judaism discusses "Sex and Violence in the Megillah," 7:30 p.m., Quaker Friends House, 60 Lowther Ave. RSVP: 416-285-3910 or info@oraynu.org. $15

ISRAELI ELECTION RESULTS
Simon Rosenblum discusses "Understanding the Israeli Election Results," 7:30 p.m., Holy Blossom Temple. Sponsored by Canadian Friends of Peace Now. Free

BEREAVEMENT GROUP
Circle of Care begins an eight-session bereavement support group for family loss (siblings, adult children, parents). 1:30- 3 p.m., Temple Sinai. Free. Register with **Charlotte**, 416-635-2860 ext. 271.

Et Cetera

CANCER SUPPORT
Cancer support for Jewish women, including social programs, educational events and resources can be found at the L'Chaim Cancer Support Group for Jewish Women. Info: 416-630-0203, or lchaim@ncjwctoronto.org.

PURIM GIFTS
DANI is selling *mishloach manot*, including items from Israel and baked goods. Order online at dani-toronto.com. Store opens March 1 at 501 Clark Ave. W., Thornhill. Details: 905-889-3264.

REENA'S SOCIAL CLUB
A social club for individuals with autism and developmental disabilities meets Thursdays, 6:30-8:30 p.m., at Beth Sholom Synagogue. $10. RSVP to awindman@reena.org

RESA'S PIECES
Resa's Pieces string ensemble is welcoming new members in all sections: violin, viola, cello and bass. Details: resaspieces.org.

For Seniors

◗ **Bernard Betel Centre**, 416-225-2112. Feb. 27, wellness lecture on an intergenerational volunteer opportunity, presented by Big Brothers and Big Sisters Toronto, 1:30 p.m., free; March 3, lecture on the story of three women living in Soviet Ukraine, 10 a.m., $4.25/$8.50; March 4, Samovar Day, celebrate Russian culture with a market, movie and concert, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., free. Register for pottery classes starting March 2, call **Jen**, ext. 105. Register for computer classes starting March 2, call **Dianne**, ext. 128.
◗ **Holy Blossom**, March 2, pianist **Jordan Klapman** performs. Program includes exercise and lunch, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., $3/$5.
◗ **Earl Bales Seniors Club.** Contact **Valerie**, 416-395-7881.

Prosserman JCC

Donald Gales Family Pavilion on the Sherman Campus, 4588 Bathurst St., 416-638-1881 ext. 4020; prossermanjcc.com.

◗ Sign up for the Birthright JCC Fitness Experience, for people 21-26, at israelforfree.com.
◗ Beginner mah-jong starts March 11, 10 a.m., bridge for beginners and intermediates starts March 26, 10 a.m. Learn to play canasta, starts March 12, 1:15 p.m.

Miles Nadal JCC

750 Spadina Ave., 416-924-6211, mnjcc.org.

◗ Register for spring programs. Member registration opens March 4, general registration opens March 11.
◗ MNJCC sing-along, no conductor, no sheet music, guitar accompanist **Nathan Hiltz**, March 11, 1 p.m.
◗ Strength of Self, alternating Mondays, 11 a.m. A program for women who have experienced abuse. Call ext. 147
◗ Shabbat Song Circle, Fridays at 10:30 a.m., for children up to age four with an adult. Ext. 390.
◗ *When I Walk Among Trees*, photos by **Theresa Bryson** on the third floor until March 1.
◗ **Seniors Arts and Culture**, ext. 155. lisar@mnjcc.org. Celebrate Shabbat in Song with **Isaac Muzikansky** and **Alexander Veprinsky**, Feb. 28, lunch at 12:30 p.m., ceremony at 1 p.m. Free. Register at ext. 0.
◗ **Seniors Fitness**, ext. 521. Start Here, a free community wellness integration program designed to provide peer support, community engagement and learning and recovery opportunities. Agency referral required. Call ext. 574
◗ Michael Bernstein Chapel holds services Thursdays at 7:15 a.m. and Sundays at 8 a.m. Info: **Coleman**, 416-968-0200

Schwartz/Reisman Centre

Joseph and Wolf Lebovic JCC, 9600 Bathurst St., 905-303-1821. Contact **Andrea** for info: andrea@srcentre.ca, or ext. 3006

◗ **Barry Schwartz** discusses "Invest Well and Retire Better," March 5, 7 p.m
◗ Mah-jong for beginners starts March 10, 1 p.m. Canasta lessons start March 12, 10 a.m. Bridge for beginners starts April 6, 7:30 p.m. Drop-in duplicate bridge, Thursdays at 6:45 p.m.
◗ LGBTQ and family Purim Shabbat dinner, March 6, 6:45-9 p.m.
◗ Day trips to the theatre: April 22, *Chicago* at Stratford Festival; May 7, *Gypsy* at Shaw Festival.
◗ Recreational programs for children, teens and young adults with autism spectrum disorder, contact karina@srcentre.ca, or ext. 3042. ■

In Judaism, stories are not just for entertainment

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 28

Perrin learned the story from Alec Gelcer, the founder of Congregation Habonim's original storytelling group, Jewish Storytelling Arts, in the early 1990s.

Rubenstein said Gelcer was the heart and soul of the storytelling program at the synagogue. After he died in 2003, Habonim held an annual storytelling festival in his honour for 10 years, but "once he passed away, we lost the core, lost the centre," Rubenstein said.

Under Gelcer's influence, he introduced stories into his sermons. He noticed that sermons on theology sometimes had his congregation squirming in their seats. "But as soon as I launched into a story, people were sitting on the edge of their seats," Rubenstein said.

He added that in Judaism, stories are not solely for entertainment. "They're for morals, values and lessons. And so while the stories themselves are captivating and enchanting and interesting, they always have a deeper underlying value." ■

The Toronto Jewish Storytelling Guild hosts evenings of stories the third Sunday of each month at 7:30 p.m. (doors open 7 p.m.) at Congregation Habonim. Anyone is welcome to tell a story. Reading is not permitted, and the only guideline is that stories should have some Jewish content. Admission is pay-what-you-can, with a suggested donation of $5. Refreshments are provided. For more information, email jewishstorytelling@gmail.com.

The staff of
The Canadian Jewish News
express their profound condolences
to the family
of a regular CJN contributor
and friend,

Norene Gilletz ז"ל

May God comfort her family among the other mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

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Rabbi Mark Glickman: Rediscovering the Cairo Genizah

MYRON LOVE
PRAIRIES CORRESPONDENT, WINNIPEG

Ten years ago, Rabbi Mark Glickman, the spiritual leader of Reform congregation Temple B'nai Tikvah in Calgary, may well have been the first rabbi in more than 100 years to set foot in the famed Cairo Genizah. Prior to that, the last known rabbi to visit the genizah was Rabbi Solomon Schechter, the man who, in 1896, brought the repository of hundreds of years' worth of Jewish books and documents stored in a synagogue in Cairo to world attention.

Glickman was in Cairo to do research for his book *Sacred Treasure – the Cairo Genizah: The Amazing Discoveries of Forgotten History in an Egyptian Synagogue Attic*. He followed that up in 2016 with the release of *Stolen Words: The Nazi Plunder of Jewish Books*.

Glickman was ordained in 1990. His first position was as a youth director in New York for the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (now the Union for Reform Judaism). He has held pulpits at Temple Israel in Dayton, Ohio, Temple Beth-El in Tacoma, Wash., and other synagogues in the Seattle area. Prior to coming to Calgary, he had filled interim positions in Boulder, Colo., and Baton Rouge, La.

Glickman is scheduled to give a multimedia presentation about the discovery of the genizah, including some video of his visit there, at Limmud in Winnipeg on March 1.

Tell our readers about Temple B'nai Tikvah.

B'nai Tikvah celebrated its 40th anniversary last year. We have a membership of 321 families. At a time when synagogues across North America are struggling, our congregation is actually growing.

What surprised me about Canada, as compared to the United States, is the denominational landscape. In America, the Reform movement is the largest denomination, as compared to Conservatism in Canada.

Rabbi Mark Glickman

How did your first book come about?

The Cairo Genizah is a fascinating story. There have been hundreds of thousands of books and articles written about the genizah, but the vast majority of them are for a scholarly audience. I saw the potential for a comprehensive history of the genizah for a wider audience. I delved into why the documents are important, how they were discovered and what happened to them.

There is a real spirit of adventure and discovery woven into this story and my book. I had to learn about medieval Jewry, some history of the written word and physical objects. I hope that I was able to bring an accessible and engaging style to the story.

How long were you in Cairo and what was the experience like?

My son and I were just in Cairo for a few days and the visit to the genizah was the highlight of the time we were there. It was a real thrill to be there. It was exciting to see the room in which so much Jewish knowledge was stored. There were prayer books, copies of books of the Torah, medical prescriptions, poetry and many other documents. I imagined pages over the centuries fluttering down to the floor. We were among just a few outside visitors that had been there in 99 years.

Where else did you go to research your book?

I did further research in Cambridge, where Solomon Schechter was a member of the faculty and where the majority of the genizah documents are stored. I also went to the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, which has the second largest collection of genizah material.

What was the response to the book?

It sold several thousand copies. It is available in both hardcover and softcover editions, as an audiobook and also as an ebook.

How soon after your first book was published did you start to work on your second book?

I actually began doing research on my second book in 2010, before my first book was released.

What attracted you to the story of the Nazi plunder of Jewish books?

That is an interesting story in itself. I am a book nerd. I had ordered a book on eBay, an 18th-century German volume on Jewish religious law. Inside the book was this bookplate: "Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc." Since I was unfamiliar with the organization, I looked into it.

This was an organization dedicated to the restitution and distribution of Jewish cultural property that was stolen by the Nazis. I discovered that the Nazis looted hundreds of millions of Jewish-owned books. For some reason, they seemed particularly interested in trashy novels and children's books.

How long did you spend researching your second book?

Three or four years. I spent some time at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York, where a lot of the rescued material was transferred after the war.

A lot of people who read the book have told me that they found it informative and important.

As a rabbi, how did you find the time to research your books?

With great difficulty. At the time that I was researching and writing the books, I wasn't engaged full-time as a rabbi. I set aside an hour first thing every morning for studying and research.

Do you have a new book in the works?

Perhaps. I am starting research on what might become a book. The working title is *Keys to the Sun and the Moon: Unlocking the Secrets to the Jewish Calendar*. This is a perplexing subject that involves mathematics, astronomy and astrology, and much more.

When do you expect to finish this book?

If I'm lucky, it will come out sometime in the next few years. ■

This interview has been edited and condensed for style and clarity.

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Stepan Bandera and the Holocaust in Ukraine

NEIL KARPENKO

On Jan. 1, Ukraine celebrated a holiday. You might think it was to mark the new year, but you would be wrong. It was the birthday of Stepan Bandera, declared a national holiday in 2018. In the Ukrainian capital Kyiv and other cities, there were traditional torchlight processions in his honour.

Bandera, born in 1909, was a leader of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN). In 1941, Bandera swore allegiance to Adolf Hitler, stating "We will lay your heads at Hitler's feet." Bandera was hoping to be recognized as a Fuehrer's vassal in Ukraine like Jozef Tiso in Slovakia.

Within days after Hitler occupied Ukraine, local henchmen, headed by Bandera, killed more than 4,000 Jews in Lviv.

Over the course of the Second World War, the Banderists exterminated more than 1.5 million Jews. (Other national groups were also subjected to ethnic cleansing: between 1943 and 1945, Ukrainian nationalists killed more than 100,000 Poles.)

On Jan. 2, 2020, Israel's Ambassador to Ukraine Joel Lion, along with the Polish Ambassador to Ukraine Bartosz Cichocki, published an open letter condemning the most recent Bandera birthday celebration (and commemorations of another Nazi aficionado, Andriy Melnyk, scheduled for later this year).

"Remembering our innocent brothers and sisters murdered in the occupied territories of Poland 1935-1945, which now constitute a part of Ukraine, we the ambassadors of Poland and Israel believe, that celebrating these individuals is an insult," they wrote. "Glorification of those who promoted actively the ethnic cleansing is counterproductive in the fight against anti-Semitism and the reconciliation of our people."

In response, on Jan. 9, the Ukrainian Ambassador to Israel Hennadii Nadolenko affirmed that the honouring of Bandera was an internal Ukrainian issue, and that the protests of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs were inappropriate and counterproductive.

The previous year, when Israel's ambassador appealed to Ukraine to stop advocating fascism, the message went similarly unheeded.

The year 2019 was dubbed the "Year of Stepan Bandera" in western Ukraine. On that occasion, Lion wrote: "I was shocked... I cannot understand how glorification of those who are directly involved in awful anti-Semitic crimes, helps in struggling against anti-Semitism and xenophobia. Ukraine should not forget these crimes, committed against Ukrainian Jews, and in no way to admire them, paying tribute to their initiators."

Last August, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky promised Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that he would fight manifestations of anti-Semitism in Ukraine. But those words were seen by many analysts as merely a display of protocol courtesy explicable by Zelensky's interest to secure profitable contracts.

Bandera's name is inseparable from the Holocaust. However, this fact seems forgotten in Ukraine. In Ukrainian bookstores, you will not find books by western researchers documenting Bandera's role in the mass execution of Jews. If such books ever did appear on the shelves of the Ukrainian booksellers, they would be swiftly censured and banned.

This was the case for Swedish historian Anders Rydell's work *Book of Thieves*, which shed light on the horrendous crimes of Symon Petliura, an idol and ideological forerunner of Bandera, responsible for killing 50,000 Jews in Ukraine in the 1920s.

Meanwhile, the Ukrainian government openly declares that there is nothing wrong in the marches of Banderists and that there is no anti-Semitism in Ukraine. Indeed, on Sept. 25, 2019, in conjunction with the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly, Zelensky met with the members of the World Jewish Congress and representatives of American Jewish organizations, assuring them that anti-Semitism as a phenomenon does not exist in his country.

But monuments to Bandera erected in Ukrainian cities where thousands of Jews were killed by Banderists prove otherwise. ■

Neil Karpenko lives in Toronto.

Ask Ella

Don't let inhibitions ruin your limelight

Ella Burakowski
eb@thecjn.ca

Dear Ella,

I'm an older woman and have been single for many years. Last year, I met a very hunky and charming younger man at the gym who is many years my junior. We talk often and he told me he is attracted to me and would like to see me outside of the gym.

I was very flattered. I'm a personal fitness trainer and in good shape. He has young children and is not looking for a relationship. I am not looking for a committed relationship. A "friends with benefits" arrangement is okay with me, so I decided to give it a try. He is attentive and skilled in the best way possible. So what's my problem?

No matter how much I dim the lights, I feel anxious and insecure, wondering what he sees when he looks at me. Does he see the signs of aging that I see when I look in the mirror? How do I get out of my own head and just enjoy this lovely little dalliance so late in my life?

Cougar Courage

Dear Cougar Courage,

You are living the dream that most older women only fantasize about. Pat yourself on the back, you're a rare commodity. However, that doesn't negate that you still have a nagging insecurity about aging that so many people struggle with.

Here you are, putting the work into looking and feeling strong, beautiful and healthy. When someone actually notices and admires you to the point of wanting an intimate relationship, you still can't completely give yourself over without that shred of doubt creeping into the back of your mind.

Besides the work you put in to looking great, you are smart, determined, ambitious and that's just what I get from reading your letter. You are so much more than a body, you are the whole package and that's what he's attracted to.

So put that nasty mirror away, it's time to access your wild child. You will not be able to enjoy this moment if you are concerned about stretch marks or cellulite. Push yourself out of your comfort zone and dance like no one is watching. Turn on those lights and go teach your new young beau a thing or two.

Dear Ella,

I started a new job in January and it's not exactly what I expected.

The job is morphing into more of a teaching position having to give presentations to rooms full of strangers, sometimes having to answer questions on the spot. I find myself sweating, nervous and I stutter a lot.

I've always been a little on the shy side and have never done any kind of teaching, or public speaking. In fact, had I known this was in the job description, I would never have taken this position.

My family is encouraging me to stick this out, that this can be a really big opportunity for me. How am I going to get through this? Does it get easier?

Nerves of Mush

Dear Nerves of Mush,

Public speaking is not easy. For some it comes naturally and others have to make it look like it comes naturally.

The butterflies you feel before you speak are normal. Your biggest fear is that you'll make a fool of yourself.

That's not going to happen, especially if you follow a few simple rules. The first, and most important, is you must be prepared. Know your material and have notes with you. If possible prepare a presentation in advance, maybe using Power Point or a similar program. Rehearse out loud, even if no one is listening. Don't eat right before your presentation, have something light a couple of hours before. Get a good night's sleep and be well-rested. Practice deep breathing before your presentation and then just go for it.

You'll feel great when it's done. Each time you're successful you'll develop more confidence to get you through the next time. It's healthy and important to push yourself outside your comfort zone. That's how you grow. ■

Ella is the author of Hidden Gold - A True Story of the Holocaust. Her advice is not a replacement for medical, legal or any other advice. For serious problems, consult a professional.

OBITUARIES AND RELATED NOTICES

BENJAMIN'S PARK MEMORIAL CHAPEL

Penny Mogil Baum	Feb 11/20	2500 Bathurst Street
Keira Kagan	Feb 9/20	100 Promenade Circle
Rita Pastor	Feb 12/20	10 William Morgan Drive
Mindy Bland	Feb 12/20	27 Abbeywood Gate
Dorothy Goldfeld	Feb 14/20	131 Torresdale Avenue
Larry Schachter	Feb 14/20	2900 Yonge Street
Susan Kendall	Feb 14/20	45 Lynnhaven Road
Edie Creed	Feb 15/20	150 Balmoral Avenue
Ruthe Simonsky	Feb 6/20	1166 Bay Street
Arnold Shear	Feb 16/20	35 Evanston Drive
Shirley Glatt	Feb 17/20	546 Steeles Ave. West
Stanley Griesman	Feb 17/20	11 Shallmar Gardens
Marc Bernstein	Feb 17/20	3560 Bathurst Street

HEBREW BASIC BURIAL

Saul Fox	Feb 11/20	1500 Steeles Ave. West
Zalman Smilovici	Feb 16/20	1101 Steeles Avenue, West

STEELES MEMORIAL CHAPEL

Kronenfeld, Zoia	February 9, 2020	27 Silker St
Nykytyszyn, Annick	February 9, 2020	Private
Wainberg, Linda	February 9, 2020	275 Doak Lane
Rothschild, Johanna Eleonore	February 10, 2020	162 North Meadow Cres
Katz, Freda	February 11,2020	11 Hyde Park Crt
Shtepa, Nikolai	February 11, 2020	Private
Greenwald, Robert	February 11, 2020	364 York Hill Blvd
Gries, Marvin Seymour	February 13, 2020	3303 Don Mills Rd
Joffe, Max	February 13, 2020	96 Charnwood Place

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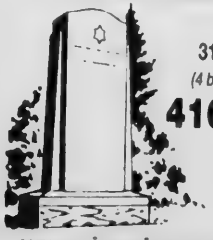

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Who won the Israeli election?

At press time, we honestly have no idea. So we just made it up. **PAGE 8**

Pur-meme sameach

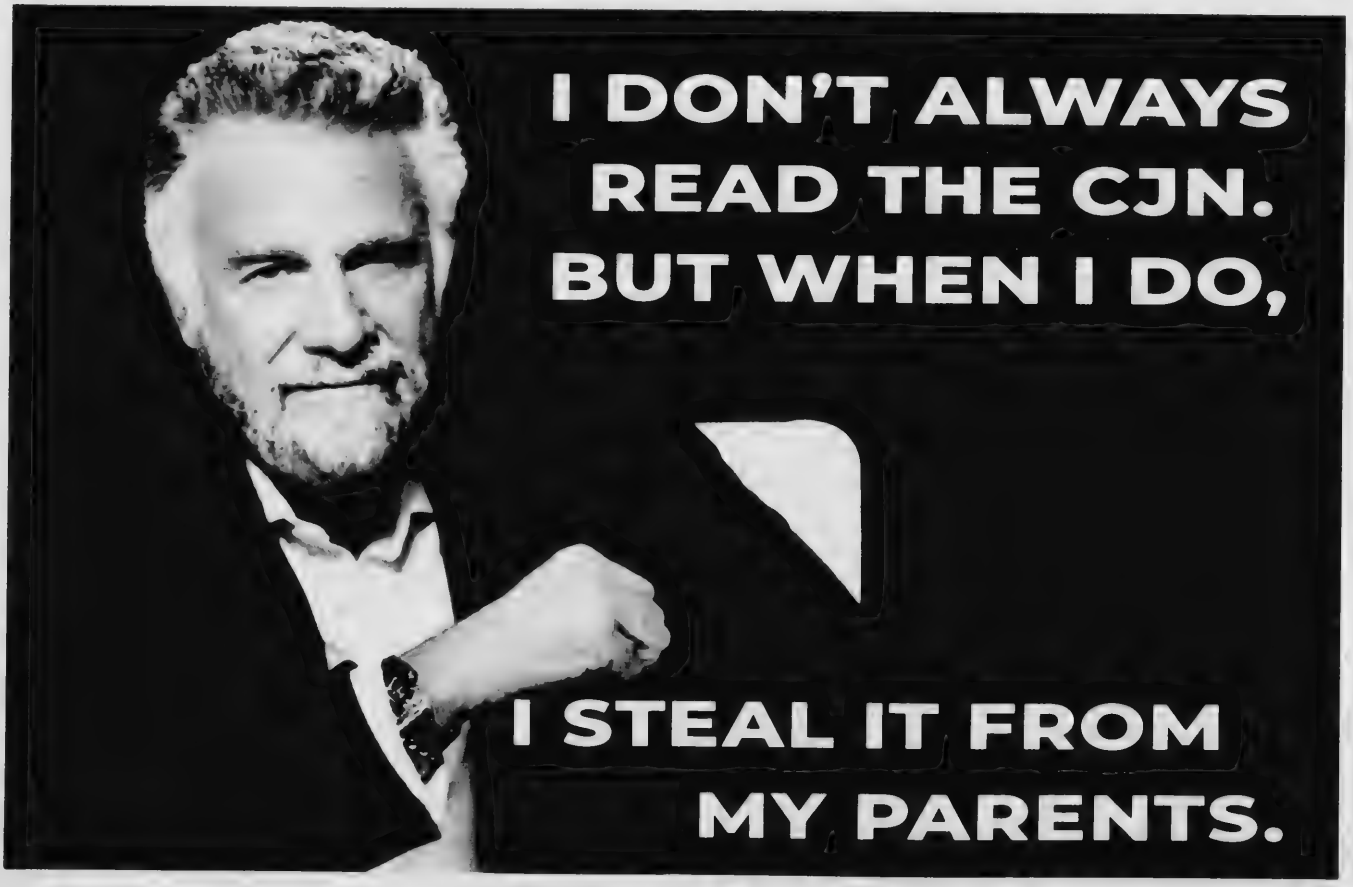
Bernie and Bloomberg, Trudeau's Omer beard and much more. **PAGES 6, 7, 10, 21, 33**

Missing the joke

The regionalization of Jewish humour becomes clear on a visit to Minsk. **PAGE 11**

Seriously, though...

Just because it's Purim doesn't mean there ain't real news. **REST OF THE PAPER**



CANDLELIGHTING, HAVDALAH TIMES

Halifax	5:51 p.m.	Look for 3 stars
Montreal	5:30 p.m.	18:35 p.m
Ottawa	postponed until Tuesday	
Toronto	5:55 p.m.	Ask the rabbi
Winnipeg	6:02 p.m.	When the puck drops
Calgary	6:08 p.m.	1:10 later
Vancouver	4:20 p.m.	Dude, where's my kippah?

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Quotable

"[illegible]"

— Jerry Jeudy, an NFL prospect, explaining that he only wears a Star of David because of his nickname, "Jeu."

Inside today's edition

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Trending

A politician for Purim

Above Znoneofthe remains the legal name of Canada's currently most persistent political prankster. Sheldon Bergson paid $137 to change it four years ago, initially to appear last on the ballot in a byelection in Whitby, Ont. He later ran in the Liberal stronghold of Ottawa-Vanier, and gained 157 votes. A return for its Feb. 27 byelection had 95 voters (or 0.48 per cent) exercising the right to tick Znoneofthe, Above, from the None of the Above party. (He's also run in two elections in his home riding, Thornhill, Ont.) The politico formerly known as Sheldon showed off his bilingual chops during debates in Ottawa. But only the French moderator heeded that the "Z" in his surname is silent.

Alas, Belgium

Aalst, Belgium, was back on the map due to its Feb. 23 carnival procession featuring caricatures of Jews, some of which were exaggerated in response to the backlash to the 2019 parade. The anti-Semitic tropes were defended by Michael Freilich, an Orthodox member of Belgium's national parliament who compared the Aalst carnival to Purim, and acknowledged that a percentage of 6,000 revellers were bound to dress inappropriately. But he also still condemned those who chose to portray Jews as vermin.

Above Znoneofthe gives blood. TWITTER PHOTO

Oldest living social media expert

Al Jaffee turns 99 on March 13, a birthday more certain to be noticed thanks to the cartoonist joining Instagram and Twitter last fall. The digital adoption came after *MAD* magazine's 2018 move away from publishing in New York City prompted Jaffee to finally retire, even though his classic fold-ins remain a staple of its reprint-heavy issues.

When asked if he was using social media by himself, @og_aljaffee confessed that "younger fingers help with all the buttons." These accounts were also how fans of the satirical magazine learned that Al's wife of 45 years, Joyce Revenson Jaffee, died on Jan. 30. ■

Compiled by Marc Weisblott of CJN Today, our email newsletter. CJNews.com/today.

Gematria

600

The number of guests invited to Ruben Golran's bar mitzvah in Milan, Italy, including relatives and friends from around the world, until the rapid spread of the coronavirus shut celebrations down.

US$80 million

The estimated fortune of Kirk Douglas when he died on Feb. 5 at age 103, of which the bulk is going to his charitable foundation. None of it is going to his son Michael, who's worth US$300 million.

347

The number of rabbis signing an open letter to U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders, in defence of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, (AIPAC) which the presidential candidate said supports "bigotry."

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Letters to the Editor

Predictable results

After the confused, hypocritical and self-righteous Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights presented a blacklist of the 112 Israeli and foreign companies operating in "occupied Palestinian territory," ("Pompeo, Israelis outraged over UN blacklisting," Feb. 20) the UN Human Rights Council should seriously consider setting up their own Palestinian Unemployment Insurance Office to ensure that Palestinian workers affected by any boycott of services and/or goods of Israeli and foreign companies are able to make ends meet.

David Honigsberg
Toronto

Remembering Norene

We're deeply saddened by the passing of Norene Gilletz, and extend our heartfelt condolences to her loved ones ("Food columnist was 'kosher Julia Child of Canada,'" Feb. 27).

Norene was an extraordinary person who touched the lives of so many in our community. Her contributions to Jewish culinary culture were iconic and a fixture in countless Jewish homes across the country and beyond. She will be missed dearly. May her memory be a blessing.

Adam Minsky, CEO, UJA Federation of Greater Toronto

A job well done

The Feb. 20 issue was remarkably interesting, in particular, the story about Sarah Schenirer's revolution in girls' Jewish education in Poland, with inspiring photographs from the 1930s. It's so very sad to think that most of those lovely frum students would be killed by the Nazis a few years later, one of them being my father's youngest sister.

Other interesting articles included the story about the archives hidden in a basement in North York and the Social Scene with pictures of the Edell and Koschitzky families assisting haredi families as part of the Jerusalem Foundation of Canada.

A great *yasher koach* for well-informed and caring journalism.

Rivka Birnbaum
Toronto

And finally...

You wrote an article the other week called "Call your mom," (CJNews.com, Feb. 30) and since that article, my life has been chaos.

My mother has called me four times a day for the past three months and I can't take it anymore. Sometimes I pick up the phone and she asks if I've gone to the bathroom enough today.

If I don't call her first thing in the morning, she texts me to call her about something important. Sure enough, by the time I call, she had already fixed the problem. Last week, before Shabbat, it took 14 pocket dials and four phone calls for her to figure out how to message someone on Facebook.

Please write another article about how moms need to calm down. Please. I beg you. My sanity is on the line here. By the way, big fan of Rabbi to Rabbi, and love the Mirvish ads.)

But seriously, get my mother to call my sister every once in a while.

Neurotically yours,

Dweezil Fishman
Moose Jaw Penitentiary

The CJN

You're already reading The CJN – now you can listen to it. The CJN Podcast Network delivers weekly audio shows straight to your smartphone, computer or tablet.

Here's what we're talking about this week:

The legacy of influential Jews looms large over the NBA. Eric Koreen, who writes about the Toronto Raptors for The Athletic, joins the Menschwarmers to chat about commissioners David Stern and Adam Silver, and the Raptors' own Jewish connections

Listen to this and every other show on The CJN Podcast Network for free at cjnews.com/podcasts, or subscribe wherever you listen to podcasts.

Letters to the editor can be emailed to cjninfo@gmail.com. All letters must bear the sender's name, address and telephone number. We reserve the right to edit and condense letters.

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The CJN is hiring!

The Canadian Jewish News (The CJN) is looking for a full-time reporter. The ideal candidate will have graduated from a post-secondary journalism program. Knowledge of or familiarity with Toronto's Jewish community would be an asset. Evening and occasional weekend work will be required. Candidate must be adept at social media, show initiative in hunting down stories and sources and be able to work efficiently and to deadline.
Our office is located in Vaughan, Ont.

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The time had come for my wife's unveiling. My kids and I wanted a monument that honoured her memory and captured who she was. A stone of lasting beauty, so that when we visited her grave, we felt close to her. The monument counsellor at Benjamin's Landmark designed a custom stone at a price we could afford. They truly took the utmost care.

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Rabbi2Rabbi

Take this with a grain of salt

In the spirit of Purim, the rabbis share some of their most comical – and totally not made-up, 100 per cent real – moments as spiritual leaders.

RABBI YAEL SPLANSKY
HOLY BLOSSOM TEMPLE, TORONTO

RABBI MARK FISHMAN
CONGREGATION BETH TIKVAH, MONTREAL

FREEIMAGES

Rabbi Splansky: On Purim, we all get to play another part and laugh at the absurdities of life. Secretly, even the most serious rabbis love Purim because it's a time when we can laugh with the same people whom we teach, lead and support through life's trials. Rabbis ought to take our title and responsibilities very seriously, but we must not take ourselves so seriously.

When rabbis get together, we love to share stories that illustrate the bloopers of synagogue life. To bring a smile to our readers this Purim, let's share a few of our own.

Rabbi Fishman: I once heard a religious leader say that he took God so seriously, but he didn't take himself that seriously at all. There is a special kind of person who can laugh at themselves and remember to take everything with a grain of salt. I write these words from a rabbinical conference, and can confirm that when we get together, we reveal some of our silly moments. It's actually quite cathartic.

One story that immediately comes to mind is the time I was taking a group of elementary kids from our afternoon school to a Shabbaton in the Laurentians. All the food was set up and everything was ready when we discovered there was no grape juice! How was I going to show the children an authentic Shabbat with no *Kiddush*?! Thankfully, from out of nowhere, a bottle of wine was discovered at the last moment. Shabbat was saved.

Rabbi Splansky: On Simchat Torah, we celebrate Consecration, when our Grade 1 students each receive their own "baby Torah" – a paper scroll they treasure and keep in a little *Aron Kodesh* their parents help to build. It's a joyful and meaningful ceremony. Grandparents and great-grandparents come to celebrate the *shalshelet ha-dorot* (chain of the generations), bound together by Torah. You can picture the scene.

I spoke to the crowd about how children have been receiving Torah from their parents since Sinai. "What happened at Mount Sinai?" I asked. And one child shouted out, "I was born at Mount Sinai!" We all had a good laugh. And I said, "This wasn't the answer I was expecting, but yes, I suppose the entire Jewish people was born at Mount Sinai."

Rabbi Fishman: On one occasion, I tripped over the aisle runner at a wedding and fell in front of everyone. It was incredibly embarrassing. Later, during the huppah, as the bride was circling around her groom, she had her sister follow her around, lifting the train of her dress. As they came to the end of the seventh circuit, the sister tripped and she, too, fell over.

It brought a loud gasp from the crowd and I, unfortunately, began to giggle. In the heat of the moment, I saw the humour in the incident and made an off-the-cuff joke. It broke the tension and, in fact, set the tone for the rest of the huppah, which was quite jovial.

Rabbi Splansky: I once was officiating at the wedding of a cousin in Chicago. My family of five was crowded into a hotel room and rushing to get ready. My husband and our little boys all looked handsome in their tuxedos. I went into the washroom to pull on my long, black velvet dress. I took it out of the dry cleaning bag, but it wouldn't fit. I gave a few tugs and I heard a strange tearing sound behind me. I looked down and discovered two globs of neon green Silly Putty!

I had no backup dress and no time to spare. In the cab, I removed as much of the goop as I could and shmeered black mascara on top of what remained. My mother tried to make me feel better, saying the globs looked like embroidered flowers. They didn't. I walked down the aisle, praying no one would notice.

To this day, how that Silly Putty got there is still an "unsolved mystery" among my teenaged boys, and now that black dress is only good for my Vashti costume.

Rabbi Fishman: Purim is the festival of taking the difficulties of our existence and turning them into something that can make us laugh. Laughter truly is the best medicine. ■

Our post-apocalyptic coverage will be epic

I hate to say it, folks, but things aren't looking all that great out there. The news keeps getting worse, day by day, hour by hour. You've probably caught yourself fretting about how we may be hurtling uncontrollably toward the end times. If you haven't, you clearly aren't paying enough attention (or you're on a really good drug plan).

Are you ready for what's to come? Where do you want to be when it all crumbles down? Now is the time to assess your preparedness in case of the worst.

The good news is that, here at *The Canadian Jewish News*, we've been getting ready for the apocalypse for years. Today, I'm happy to tell you that we've got the situation under control. Rest assured: we've thought of everything.

Like any good Jewish tradition, it all begins in the home. As you begin to curtail travel into the increasingly scary outside world, you can count on us to keep you informed about the latest developments at home and abroad. Plus, starting next month, look for your very own *CJN* emergency preparedness kit in the mail. There's clean water (not too hot, not too cold), IDF-issue gas masks, multi-tool utility knives that we personally hand-selected from that one army surplus store on Ben Yehuda Street in Jerusalem that everyone goes to, as well as plenty of antacid pills, should the worst come to fruition.

And when panicked officials impose nationwide curfews, look no further than *The CJN* for help. We're getting set to roll out two new services that are sure to please. First up is CJNTV, our all-Jewish all-the-time streaming platform. Instead of dozing off to another episode of *The Office*, you can snooze to the sounds of *Shtisel* or *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*. Watch out for our first original series, *So You Think You Can Kvetch*. (After the kids go to bed, the more curious may wish to indulge in our exclusive adults-only program *Canadian Jewish Nudes*.)

As the national infrastructure begins to crumble all around us, what are you going to serve for dinner? We thought of that, too. Get ready for bespoke food delivery, featuring a range of options sure to please – from kosher, kosher-style and kosher-adjacent to "vegetarian." Hey, it beats throwing some elbows on the way to the frozen chicken aisle!

> *At this very moment, we are completing construction of a massive bunker located below the new JCC in Toronto*

Finally, when the battle of Gog and Magog intensifies beyond the point of no return, and it's time to head underground, you can breathe easy knowing we've got you covered – literally. Yes, at this very moment, we are completing construction of a massive bunker located below the new JCC in Toronto. (Did you really think it took that long to deal with a bit of "asbestos" and "mould"? You should give your Jewish communal organizations a little more credit than that!) There's a room in there with your name on it – sign up now for early-bird pricing (rates go up after the Democratic presidential nominee is decided).

All your favourite *CJN* personalities will be there, too. Imagine this: it's a lazy, climate-controlled afternoon 1,800 feet below the ground. You take a stroll to marvel at the 600,000 shining angels guarding the bunker's double gate made of carbuncle. The couple down the hall has invited you to their son's bar mitzvah, taking place in one of 100 social halls (now accepting bookings for 2036). On the way, you stop by the library, where Gil Troy is giving a talk about Israel's unique ability to ward off the zombie hordes. After the simcha, you grab a *fress* at the herring buffet before heading home. Can't you just picture it?

Happy Purim. ■ — YONI

From the Archives

Happy Purim

ONTARIO JEWISH ARCHIVES, BLANKENSTEIN FAMILY HERITAGE CENTRE, UJA FEDERATION OF GREATER TORONTO

Guests celebrate at the annual Weinreich Purim party on Joicey Boulevard in Toronto, in 1965. Tamara and Mietek Weinreich hosted annual Purim parties at their home with lavish décor. Later the couple monetized the success of these events to raise funds for the Anne Frank Foundation. Tamara Weinreich collection.

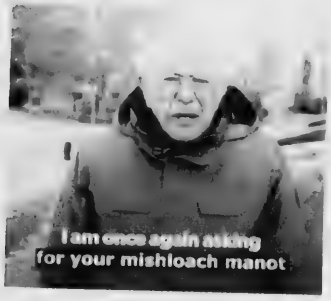
SeeJN

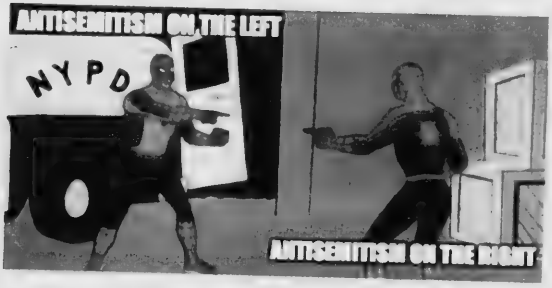
Polling station

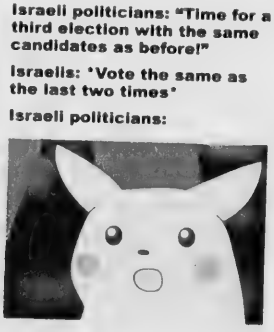
FLASH90 PHOTO

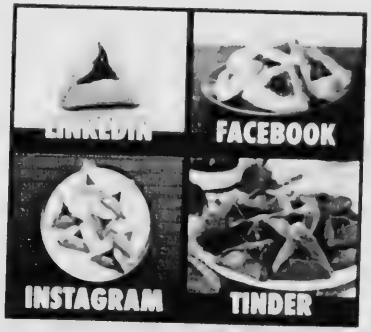
A special polling station for voters quarantined due to possible exposure to the coronavirus is set up in Tel Aviv.

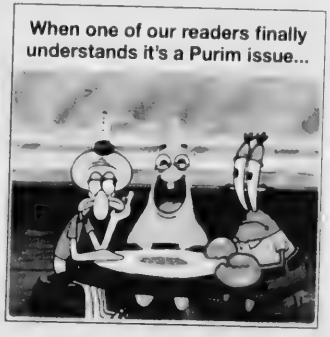
Happy Pur-Meme






Israeli politicians: "Time for a third election with the same candidates as before!"
Israelis: 'Vote the same as the last two times'
Israeli politicians:





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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
MARCH 5, 2020

A sombre new ceremony

Israelis mark 50th anniversary of meaningless elections

FRANK LEE FRAIDMAN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Israelis congregated in sombre reflection on April 9, 2069 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of their twice-annual ritual, the Calling of the Election.

In Jerusalem, Hasidic Jews flocked to the Kotel to recite the *Tefilat ha-Bechirot* (Prayer of the Election), before gathering around their dinner tables with loved ones to collectively open Israel's voting app and partake in what many still believe is a valid electoral process.

"I know it's a silly ritual," said Golda Firstein, 43, who was heading home to begin the voting process at sundown. "But when you think about it, it's about as logical as waving a fake lemon in a tree house you built in your backyard."

After 50 years, Israel's two leading parties, Likud and Blue and White, remain tied for first place, each retaining around 5 per cent of the vote. The remaining 90 per cent is evenly split between the other 30 parties theoretically represented in the Knesset, which has not convened in more than 40 years.

In Tel Aviv, the acting leader of the Likud party, Moishe Mendelson, held a massive rally in Yarkon Park, garnering crowds of over 10,000 people.

"Our beloved leader, Benjamin Netanyahu, would be proud to see us carrying on his tradition," Mendelson proclaimed. "Had he not died in jail in 2048, wrongfully sentenced to live out the final years of his life in prison due to made up charges of corruption, he would still stand with us today, fighting that great fight to form an actual government."

Because Netanyahu was never defeated in an election, Mendelson reminded audience members, the late leader remains the legal prime minister of the State of Israel, more than 20 years after his death.

"Our great nation has never formed a government since 2019," Mendelson roared to his supporters. "You know why? Because we never found anyone good enough to replace Bibi!"

The Calling of the Election began exactly 50 years ago, when Israelis first went to the polls on April 9, 2019, without any political party garnering enough votes to form a government. In those days, Israel had elections similar to those of other countries: citizens would show up to polling booths, cast votes on paper ballots and expect someone to win.

In the decades since, the event has evolved to include prayer, family gatherings and mourning, making it a solemn reminder of the social division, economic failure and skyrocketing crime rate that defines Israel in the 21st century.

In the days leading up to the Calling of the Election, many politicians also report their largest fundraising numbers of the year. Numerous activists have tried to transform the political system, including influential author David Grossman, who has described the Calling of the Election as "a more depressing routine than Yom Kippur."

In the 2020s, Grossman led a grassroots campaign with the hashtag #PleaseGodLetThisEndAlready, which aimed to change the nation's complicated proportional representation voting system to ranked ballots, first-past-the-post or a higher threshold of what constitutes a legal party.

Despite that campaign, and multiple similar efforts over subsequent years, Israelis have never been able to agree on another system.

"We came quite close when Bibi was sentenced to jail in 2034," recalls Adi Haddat, author of *Why The Hell Are We Still Doing This?: A Complicated History of Israel's Complicated Elections.*

Haddat says, after Netanyahu's conviction, "there was more national hope for the future than during the Oslo Accords."

Optimism dissolved, however, once leaders from the Blue and White party realized Likud still planned on keeping Netanyahu on as leader, nullifying any possibility of a coalition.

"Nobody expected Netanyahu to run again," Haddat says. "Nobody thought it was even legal. But without a proper government to challenge it, he faced no real opposition."

Months after his imprisonment, Netanyahu teleconferenced into the annual Likud convention via WhatsApp and delivered a rousing speech in which he spoke the now-famous line inscribed on his tombstone: "You can convict me, you can imprison me, you can bankrupt me – and people will still vote for me!"

Benny Gantz, 109, who has led the Blue and White party since its inception, was unavailable for comment. Five years ago, Gantz suffered a debilitating heart attack after misreading poll results, mistakenly believing Blue and White had actually won.

Across the border, in the State of Palestine, leaders expressed sympathy for their struggling neighbours.

"Twenty years ago, we were lucky to establish, with the help of European nations and the United States, a viable democratic government using a logical electoral system," said Palestinian President Aboud al-Bazragh. "We are saddened to see our friends in Israel tormented in this political purgatory. Israeli economic migrants know our message well: our doors are always open to you." ■

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It's time for us to humanize the other side

Ahad Ha'Amalek

> *Pharaoh wasn't a bad guy. Just a weak guy.*

In Jewish schools across the world, students learn about the glorious history of the Jewish People, how we have suffered through tragedy after tragedy, oppression after oppression, and yet have always come out on the other side intact, and that much stronger and wiser.

For almost all of the past 2,000 years, we were a people in exile, a vulnerable people existing at the whims of the ruling class of whatever land we happened to occupy at the time. And even before that, before the fall of the Second Temple and our exile at the hands of the Romans, we often found ourselves facing existential threats.

Yet here we are today, over 70 years after the Jewish return to the land of Israel, a strong and prosperous nation with a strong and prosperous nation-state. We no longer need to operate from a scarcity mindset, thinking only of our own survival. Now we can operate from a point of view of growth and magnanimity, an expansive mindset that reflects the better angels of our nature.

Our standing in the world is perhaps more safe and secure than it has ever been. Which means it's high time to expand our point of view and start looking at the Jewish narrative from the other side, to paint a comprehensive and more objective picture of the story of the people of Israel. It's high time to take responsibility for people other than ourselves. It's high time that we start teaching our students how to humanize… that's right, you know who I'm talking about… yes, the villains from the Jewish holidays!

I mean, think about it. Passover is coming up soon, and we like to pretend it's a story about the universal right to freedom. But here's the thing. Jews still kept slaves after Exodus. The Torah still talks about slaves after Exodus. It's not really a story about the immorality of slavery, but about the power of the Jewish God. Pharaoh was just a man of his time, profiting off slavery like everyone else. Back then, might equalled right. God hardened Pharaoh's heart to keep the Jews in Egypt so He would have a weaker opponent against whom He could display his almighty power. So in the end, Pharaoh lost because he took a pagan religion to a monotheistic god fight, and *that* is the lesson of Passover. Pharaoh wasn't a bad guy. Just a weak guy.

And don't get me started on Purim! Look at it from Haman's perspective. You're a Grand Vizier to a powerful emperor, taking your daily stroll through the marketplace or whatever, lording it over the underlings who profess their ultimate worship of you and your empire and everything it represents.

And then here's this one man, he calls himself a Jew, and he defies your authority! Refuses to respect your sovereignty! And not only that, but he says all of his people are the same! What's a Grand Vizier to do? Just accept the presence of a highly seditious people in his ranks? Of course not. Any loyal and competent Grand Vizier in the ancient times would surely use whatever means necessary to remove those people and protect the integrity of his empire. Yet Haman ended up taking the fall and dying gruesomely in the end. And he's the villain?

For Hanukkah, it's the same deal with the Maccabees and Antiochus. It's always the pesky Jews who want to do things their own way, who believe they're entitled to equal rights, to self-actualization as a people. But, news flash!: the world didn't work that way back then. We shouldn't blame the villains in the Jewish stories for acting out the norms of their times. How were they supposed to know any better?

The one saving grace from all these underdog narratives is that, now that we are the ones who rule in our own land, we'll be certain to respect and protect the individual freedoms of everyone under our control. Millennia of experience have taught us the injustice of oppression, which means that now, we surely know better. There is no other side that we have to humanize, because we already look at everyone with equal humanity.

Right? ■

A White House Purim party

David Weinfeld

Building off the successful tradition of White House Passover seders and Hanukkah celebrations, U.S. President Donald Trump recently hosted the first-ever White House Purim party. Dressed entirely in gold, he greeted guests as they entered.

"How do you like my costume?" he asked the first arrival, Sheldon Adelson. "I'm dressed as a real billionaire!"

Adelson chuckled and slicked back his silver wig. "I'm here as Bibi, because that's how I envision myself anyway!"

They filed into the reception room and spotted U.S. Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, the man in charge of the alcohol. Catering was originally going to be left to The Donald himself, but Alan Dershowitz informed him that Big Macs and well-done steaks were not appropriate Purim cuisine, and ordered some hamantashen from a local bakery.

Incidentally, years ago, Dershowitz had served as defence attorney to Haman in a moot court at Harvard Hillel. He failed to secure an acquittal then, but says it served as excellent practice for defending real-life villains.

Meanwhile, Ivanka Trump, who had dressed up as Queen Esther last year, said she wanted to try something more evil this Purim. "I'm dressed up as someone with liberal values," she announced. Her husband, Jared Kushner, came in a very professional suit with a briefcase and glasses, but no apparent costume. "He's going as someone with real credentials," explained Ivanka.

Former New York mayor Mike Bloomberg snuck in uninvited, dressed as Donald Trump. Despite height and weight differences, he really pulled off the look, with many onlookers seeing a striking resemblance between the two. Bloomberg needed an especially good costume, as he didn't want to get stopped and frisked at the entrance. Alas, he was recognized and had to slip the bouncer $7 million.

Sen. Mitt Romney was not invited. "He doesn't drink alcohol, the square!" Kavanaugh shouted between keg stands. But you got the sense that wasn't the real reason.

Russian President Vladimir Putin was invited, and also came dressed as the president, drawing some nervous laughter.

"Where's Rudy Giuliani?" bellowed Trump, looking around the room. "Quiet. He's in Ukraine," Putin replied, elbowing Trump in the side.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Sen. Mitch McConnell did not seem to be wearing an identifiable costume. "In deference to the radical Democrats' opinion of me, I came dressed as Satan," he announced wryly.

Meanwhile, white nationalist Richard Spencer and Fox News host Tucker Carlson were clowning around and having a good laugh in the corner of the room dressed in Ku Klux Klan robes.

Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos came in looking like a high school teacher with chalk and a stack of exams to grade in-hand. "Someone who has experience working in education," she said when asked about her costume.

Conservative radio host Rush Limbaugh entered wearing his Presidential Medal of Freedom, presented to him during the recent State of the Union address. "I wanted to honour previous winners of this award, so I dressed up as Elie Wiesel," Limbaugh bellowed. "He and I share many values."

Several Republican senators had put together a group costume. They appeared to be bleeding and suffering from a host of diseases, from coronavirus to the bubonic plague. "We're dressed as people from Canada, Israel, France, Denmark and other countries that have to deal with the horrors of universal health care," Maine Sen. Susan Collins shouted. "Yeah, we would never allow any Americans to live with the conditions of those hellholes!"

Another group costume saw a bunch of Republican congresspeople dressed as Earth, with a thermometer indicating quickly rising temperatures. "We wanted to dress up as a hoax – you know, fake news. We decided to go as climate change," they explained.

Finally, everyone gathered for the megillah reading. "This year we have a special twist," Trump announced. "We're going to replace the word 'Haman' with 'Bernie.'" And so they attempted to drown out Bernie's name, but they could hear it being shouted louder and louder outside the White House by a diverse coalition of voters dressed as the future of America. ■

Do you disagree with our columnists? Have your say by writing to cjninfo@gmail.com.

When Jewish humour divides us

Anna Shternshis

There was once a Jewish couple stranded on a desert island. They weren't the least bit worried. Why? They had recently pledged $36 to the UJA and they knew they would be found.

I recently returned from a conference in Minsk, where I gave a couple of talks on Jewish humour. The response to this joke was crickets. Humour needs context, and in most of the former Soviet Union, membership in most Jewish organizations are free, and many institutions compete for their audiences by offering highly subsidized programming to youth, elderly and everyone in between. It does not cost money to go to shul. The joke about phone solicitation was from another planet.

Still, considering that 38 per cent of Canadian Jews report that having a sense of humour is essential to their Jewish identity, I was confident that there could be some universal Jewish humour at the Regional Nahum Goldmann Fellowship and Limmud FSU seminar, held in Minsk, for a group of young Jewish leaders from the former Soviet Union.

I began with stories about my research on humour of the Soviet 1920s and 1930s, about how Russian Jews were learning Russian and forgetting Yiddish, experiencing living in cities versus smaller towns, and learning new cultural values, while savouring the old ones. There are so many gems in Yiddish humour from that period, ranging from the cynical, "*nisht fun dem al khet iz der tukhes fet*", roughly translated as "not from reading prayers one gains weight," to the bigoted, such as calling lumps in Cream of Wheat "*shikselekh*," to the political "what is the difference between *kolkhoz* (a Soviet collective farm) and *Kol Nidrei*? The answer: "On *Kol Nidrei*, one fasts for one day, for *kolkhoz*, you fast all year."

The real interest arose when I spoke about things that Canadian Jews find funny. For example, when the joke about the Jewish couple on a desert island fell on deaf ears, I had to explain about memberships to synagogues and tickets for the high holidays. Similarly, all of the jokes about Jewish moms seemed out of place (people who are stereotyped as overbearing, but never over-critical).

Humour in North America doesn't always translate to the former Soviet Union.
AMAZON PRIME VIDEO PHOTO

> *A group of people that laughs at the same jokes becomes a community.*

Similarly, they didn't relate to the jokes about Jewish American princesses either – no one knew what this term meant, and they didn't see these jokes as self-deprecating, but rather bluntly misogynistic and anti-Semitic (I had to agree on that one).

We spoke, quite a bit, in fact, about jokes by or about Jews that none of us find funny. For example, we discussed how one makes jokes about the Holocaust: we looked into the folklore of the Warsaw Ghetto as well as Yiddish jokes about Hitler created in Kazakhstan in the 1940s.

People felt comfortable talking about appropriateness of Israeli Holocaust jokes and films such as *Life Is Beautiful*. But when I reported that in the Soviet Union, during the war, a joke circulated that Jews served in the Tashkent Front (alleging to the anti-Semitic myth that Soviet Jews did not participate in the Red Army war effort, but instead survived the war in Central Asia, away from the battles), an uncomfortable silence filled the room. I asked them why, and one woman said: "Because it is just so untrue!" Everyone nodded. They were offended for their great-grandfathers and could not distance themselves enough to analyze the joke.

What jokes did they find funny? The ones from the Soviet period, like this one:

"Rabinowich, do you know how to play violin?"

"I don't know, I have not tried it!"

Now that the holiday of Purim is here, it is commanded that we laugh at ourselves. Our ancestors who came up with this idea, I am sure, knew that a group of people that laughs at the same jokes becomes a community. But what do we do today, when political borders and hundreds of years of separate histories have divided Jewish people into groups that can laugh at each other, but not with each other? Can we still be a community? Let's make a joke about it, and see how it goes! ■

Anna Shternshis is the Al and Malka Green professor of Yiddish Studies and director of Anne Tanenbaum Centre for Jewish Studies, University of Toronto.

News

Ontario closer to adopting anti-Semitism bill

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An Ontario bill to combat anti-Semitism has passed second reading. MPPs voted 55-0 to send Bill 168 to committee.

The Feb. 27 vote saw members from all sides of the aisle speak passionately for the bill and the need to fight anti-Semitism in Ontario.

The private member's bill, introduced by Conservative MPP Will Bouma in December and co-sponsored by fellow Tory Robin Martin, calls on the government to be "guided" by the working definition of anti-Semitism adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) when it interprets acts, regulations and policies, in order to "protect Ontarians from discrimination and hate amounting to anti-Semitism."

Ontario would be the first province to adopt the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism should the bill be passed in its current form.

"Anti-Semitism is wrong, no matter who you are or where you live," Bouma told the legislature. "It has been a scourge on society in times past and continues to be so across the world today. Unfortunately, that includes Ontario."

He cited an increase in hate crimes and the rise of the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel. An incident targeting the Jewish community takes place roughly every 24 hours in Canada, and Jews are the most frequently targeted group for hate crimes in this country, Bouma stated.

"This is completely unacceptable," he said. "By unifying the government to be guided by the IHRA definition, this bill will permit a whole-of-government response to the scourge that is anti-Semitism."

Will Bouma

He noted that the IHRA definition is supported by 33 countries as well as numerous Jewish organizations around the world.

In her remarks, Martin cited recent anti-Jewish incidents at York University and the University of Toronto. "While valid criticism of Israel does not constitute anti-Semitism, failure to separate the needs of Jewish students on a university campus in Toronto from valid concern or criticism of the Israeli government certainly does," she said.

His voice cracking with emotion, the NDP's John Vanthof cited the recent 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. He sought to allay concerns that the bill, should it become law, would be used to stifle criticism of Israel.

He said the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism was not intended to be legally binding. Bill 168 "should function as an expression of our shared commitment to fight anti-Semitism," Vanthof said. "The official Opposition, the NDP, will not oppose this bill."

Earlier this month, Karen Mock, president of JSpace Canada, a progressive group, wrote to NDP Leader Andrea Horwath urging support for Bill 168.

Jewish MPPs Roman Baber and Andrea Khanjin spoke in favour of the bill. "Today, we're drawing a clear line," Baber said. "We're calling anti-Semitism what it is. We're putting our finger on it and defining it. We made it explicit so no one will miss it. We're saying, 'this is wrong.'"

Thornhill MPP Gila Martow said the Jewish community "is tired of just talk. This bill allows action."

It was a busy week leading up to the debate on Bill 168. On Feb. 25, a group opposed to the measure, including members of Independent Jewish Voices of Canada (IJV), which supports the BDS campaign against Israel, held a press conference at Queen's Park to urge MPPs to reject the "flawed" bill.

The activists charged that with its adoption of the IHRA definition, the bill "conflates" anti-Semitism with legitimate criticism of Israel, and that as a law, it would be used to silence dissent on Israel's treatment of Palestinians.

The next day, the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) announced its support for the IJV position on the bill, which "infringes on both freedom of expression and academic freedom on post-secondary education campuses."

If passed into law, the bill "threatens to criminalize activists fighting for Palestinian rights as well as critical analysis on Israel and Zionism," charged the CFS, which represents some 530,000 students across Canada.

The CFS "has once again proven that their mandate has been hijacked by the fringes, and that they are completely incapable of representing the constituents they are intended to serve," Ilan Orzy of Hillel Ontario, told *The CJN*.

Daniel Koren, executive director of Hasbara Fellowships Canada, said, "It is incredibly offensive that the CFS believes it can dictate what constitutes anti-Semitism and speak on behalf of Canada's Jewish community, which overwhelmingly supports adopting the IHRA definition."

Finally, more than 350 Canadian academics have signed an open letter denouncing the IHRA definition, calling it an "imposition" that would "imperil the pursuit of truth and the legitimate expression of dissent."

The federal government adopted the IHRA definition in June 2018 as part of a $45 million anti-racism strategy. It's been endorsed by the Montreal suburb of Westmount and the City of Vaughan, north of Toronto, but failed to win approval in Vancouver and Montreal. A resolution to "explore" the IHRA definition was withdrawn by its sponsor before Calgary's city council could consider it last November.

The Ontario bill now heads to the standing committee on justice policy for review and public input. ■

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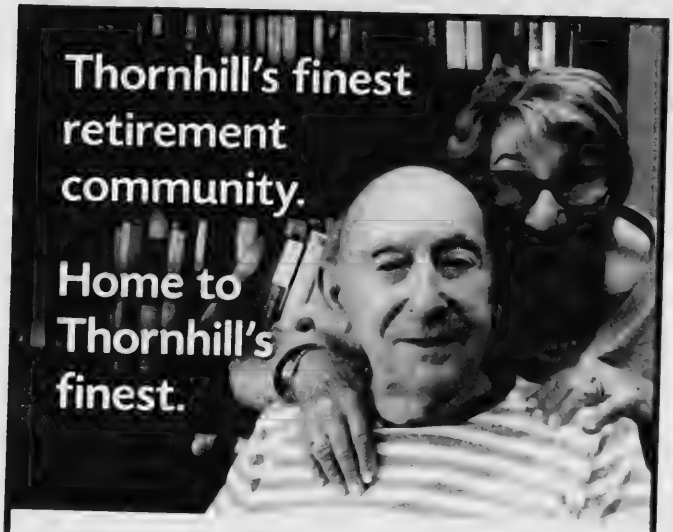
*When asked to self identify by a Jewish denomination/movement, the largest group by far is those who answer "Conservative/Masorti", CIJA 2018 Survey of Jews in Canada



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Jews still most targeted group for hate crimes: Statistics Canada

The number of incidents targeting Jews declined slightly in 2018, Statistics Canada reported.

PAUL LUNGEN
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It was a good news/bad news scenario for Canadian Jews – with an emphasis on the bad news – when it came to hate crimes reported to police in 2018 and compiled by Statistics Canada.

First, the good news: the number of incidents targeting Jews declined in 2018 to 347 from 360 the year before, a drop of four per cent.

Now, the bad news, and there was plenty of it. Jews were again the most targeted victim group in Canada in 2018, accounting for more than 19 per cent of all incidents. While the number of events in which Jews were victims fell, the decline experienced by Jews was far less than the overall drop in criminal incidents based on religion, which plummeted by 24 per cent.

Other minority groups fared better than Jews. The next most targeted victim group, black people, saw a 12 per cent drop in the number of incidents, from 321 in 2017 to 283 in 2018.

Incidents due to a victim's sexual orientation declined by 15 per cent, while events involving Muslims plunged by 50 per cent.

Those findings were reported in *Police-Reported Hate Crimes in Canada, 2018*, released on Feb. 26 by Statistics Canada. The report is based on a survey of police forces across Canada that serve most of the country.

Overall, "in 2018, police reported 1,798 criminal incidents in Canada that were motivated by hate....The number of police-reported hate crimes decreased by 13 per cent, or 275 fewer incidents, compared to the previous year.

"With the exception of 2017, the number of hate crimes in 2018 was higher than any other year in the past 10 years," the report stated.

Those figures were particularly applicable to Canada's Jews. Despite the four per cent decline in 2018, from a particularly high number in 2017, Jews experienced 57 per cent more hate crimes in 2018 than in 2016.

Though leading in the dubious distinction of being the No. 1 victims when it comes to hate-motivated crimes, Jews account for only about one per cent of the population of Canada, a fact noted by the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA).

Joel Reitman and Jeffrey Rosenthal, co-chairs of CIJA, issued a statement saying, "All Canadians should be troubled by the worrying trend of anti-Semitism in Canada. Despite an overall decline in hate crime, incidents targeting the Jewish community remained stable after a sharp spike in 2017. What starts with Jews, never ends with Jews. We continue to urge Canadian leaders at all levels of government to take action in protecting our community from the dangers of Jew-hatred."

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Michael Mostyn, CEO of B'nai Brith Canada, said, "The StatsCan report shows once again that Canadian Jews were the most targeted group for hate crimes in 2018, a trend continuing from the previous three years.

Mostyn said the StatsCan data does not "capture the whole picture of anti-Semitic hate crime, which is shown in our *Annual Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents*," due to be released in the coming months.

Examining the nature of criminal incidents across the country, StatsCan noted, "During the same period (from 2010-18), 84 per cent of crimes against the Jewish population were non-violent. The large majority of the non-violent hate crimes were general mischief (81 per cent) as well as hate-motivated mischief relating to property primarily used for religious worship or by an identifiable group (seven per cent). The most common violent offence against this population was uttering threats (42 per cent of violent offences and seven per cent of all offences targeting the Jewish population)."

The report found that the national rate of incidents in Canada's metropolitan centres was 4.9 per 100,000 people, with the total rate of incidents in Toronto (6.4) and Montreal (6.5) home to the two largest Jewish communities in Canada – above the national average.

Overall, half of all hate crimes occurred in Canada's four largest cities – Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and Calgary – even though they are home to 38 per cent of the total population.

Still, the total number of incidents in Toronto declined by 155 and decreased by 35 in Montreal – though those dips came after substantial spikes in 2017, leaving the 2018 statistics higher than in 2016.

As a result, StatsCan stated, "hate crimes remain at the highest level historically. The decrease in Toronto was driven by decreases in crimes motivated by hatred of the Muslim (-71 incidents), Jewish (-31 incidents) and black (-18) populations."

The major cities with the highest rate of hate incidents were Hamilton, Ont., Quebec City and Ottawa.

"Like Hamilton, hate crimes in Ottawa primarily targeted the Jewish (37 per cent) and black (14 per cent) populations," the report stated.

Noting the prevalence of hate crimes against Jews, CIJA pointed to proposed legislation currently being vetted in the Ontario provincial parliament as one way of addressing the issue: "Sadly, Ontario, home to the largest Jewish population in Canada, experiences more hate crime than any other province."

CIJA urged Ontario lawmakers to adopt Bill 168: An Act to Combat Anti-Semitism.

"Countering the scourge of hate is vital. We urge all members of provincial parliament to support this bill, thereby affirming their commitment to combating anti-Semitism and all other forms of hate," CIJA stated.

Subsequent to their statement, the bill passed second reading with unanimous support from all parties. ■

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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
MARCH 5, 2020

Family, friends recall 'creative and innovative' Gilletz

BARBARA SILVERSTEIN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN, MONTREAL

Norene Gilletz, sometimes referred to as the Canadian queen of kosher cuisine, was a trailblazer, according to her rabbi and personal friend Rabbi Jarrod Grover, spiritual leader of Beth Tikvah Synagogue in Toronto.

Rabbi Grover officiated at Gilletz's funeral in Montreal, where the cookbook author died on Feb. 23, surrounded by her family, following a long illness. She was 79.

Rabbi Grover said he and his wife, Carmela, met Gilletz when they moved to her neighbourhood. But he had an earlier connection: his mother went into labour with him while attending a cooking lesson with Gilletz.

He said her success 50 years ago set a milestone for "creative and innovative" kosher cooking.

"Norene cleared the way and served as a role model for many of today's top culinary authors and chefs....That gave her so much pride and such a sense of accomplishment, purpose and fulfilment," he said.

Gilletz, the author of 12 kosher cookbooks, and a longtime contributor to *The CJN*, did not initially plan a career in food.

Norene Gilletz

The Winnipeg native actually won a scholarship to study German – she was fluent in Yiddish – at the University of Manitoba. Ultimately, she attended secretarial college. At age 19, she moved to Montreal and found an office job.

A year later, she was married, but she had no cooking skills, her sister Rhonda (Cookie) Matias, later recalled. "She learned to cook long-distance through phone calls with our mother, Belle Rykiss."

By her mid-20s, Gilletz, then a young mother, was an accomplished cook, but she "yearned for more," Rabbi Grover explained. "She yearned to be someone and achieve something."

At that time, she joined B'nai Brith Women. Gilletz's chapter was creating a cookbook and she became the editor by virtue of her writing skills.

Her daughter, Jodi Sprackman, said Gilletz had a love of grammar and punctuation. "A poorly composed sentence irked her as much as a recipe that flopped," said Sprackman.

The B'nai Brith cookbook, first published in 1968, became the iconic best-seller *Second Helpings, Please!* and kicked off Gilletz's culinary career.

"*Second Helpings* was Norene's beginning," Rabbi Grover said. "What she became, all the achievements and prominence, followed naturally from there."

He recounted how people started to ask Gilletz for cooking advice, which led her to start a home-based cookware store and cooking school. The business grew into Norene's Cuisine, a catering and kitchenware shop with a cooking school on the premises.

Rabbi Grover noted that Gilletz began selling food processors because she had a knack for predicting trends. Her involvement with home appliance brand Cuisinart led her to self-publish *The Pleasures of Your Food Processor*, which was later republished as *The Food Processor Bible*.

After moving to Toronto in 1998, Gilletz published *Meal Lean i Yumm!* She was soon in demand for cooking demos across the country and more recipe books followed.

She also launched Norene Gilletz Kitchen, her kosher food line, and a Facebook group called Norene's Kitchen!, which had more than 10,000 members at the time of her death.

Rabbi Grover described Gilletz as "a perfectionist who did not back down from a challenge," adding that she never retired. "Her best cookbook.... *The Brain Boosting Diet*, is just reaching the market now," and despite her illness, Gilletz took great pleasure in "staying in touch with her fans."

He spoke of Gilletz's humour and humility, her warmth and kindness. "Norene was remarkable because she connected so easily with people....She enjoyed talking to anyone from anywhere," adding that there was no rushing a conversation, "even though it would certainly make her late."

Gilletz is survived by her brother and sister, three children and their spouses, and five grandchildren. ■

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ASHLEY MOLNAR

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"Let the kids swim in our fabulous pool as you sneak in a quick nine and reconnect over a fabulous meal at our beautiful clubhouse," Bradshaw said.

Its beautiful amenities, outdoor swimming pool, tennis courts and child recreation facilities coincide with a dining and social program desired by all.

"There's much more to Maple Downs than the course. It is truly a family club," said Canadian Golf Hall of Famer and Maple Downs honorary member Lorne Rubenstein. "My grandkids live in California and New York, and when they visit during the season, well, they're up at Maple almost every day to swim. Maple becomes a summer camp for them," he said.

Exclusive to members, Maple Downs is dedicated to the highest standards of golf playability. For over 40 years, the club was blessed to have Canadian golf legend and Ontario Golf Hall of Fame member Irv Lightstone as its head golf professional. Its picturesque and finely manicured golf course has been recognized by *SCOREGolf* magazine as No. 62 of the top 100 in Canada.

"Whatever your golfing level, you will find the course challenging, the scenery beautiful and the camaraderie contagious," Bradshaw said.

Members enjoy the luxury of accessible tee times on the recently renovated golf course – a project lead by renowned North American architect Ian Andrew.

"The course redo a couple of years ago made it much more challenging, and I really enjoy playing it when I'm back home in the summer," said PGA Tour golfer Ben Silverman, who is also an honorary member at the club. "The second hole is a great-looking par 3 and it is without question my favourite on the course."

In addition to its beautiful grounds and amenities, Maple Downs is home to an outstanding culinary experience led by executive chef Jonathan Comerio. The club's professional hospitality team ensures an excellent dining atmosphere for members and their guests, who are invited to come together to enjoy traditional Shabbat dinners, featuring classic cuisine.

The newly designed patio and outdoor kitchen offer a gorgeous view and a relaxed setting, creating the perfect destination for a summer lunch, cold beverage or dinner, while watching the sunset over the golf course.

The clubhouse at Maple Downs is the perfect venue for hosting weddings, business meetings and family gatherings of all sizes. Guests will appreciate the staff's attention to detail specific to each event, in keeping with the club's motto: "Your family. Your friends. Your Maple Downs."

"We look forward to welcoming you!" Bradshaw said. ■

For membership inquiries that you don't want to miss out on, and to learn more about our incredible group incentives program, contact Ryan Bradshaw, general manager of Maple Downs Golf & Country Club, at 905-832-0880 ext. 234, or by email: rbradshaw@mapledowns.com.

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B'nai Brith to sue the federal government

RON CSILLAG
rcsillag@thecjn.ca

B'nai Brith Canada is taking the federal government to court for failing to enforce a parliamentary motion that called on Ottawa to list Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist group.

B'nai Brith has served notice in Federal Court that it wants the government to implement a motion that was approved unanimously in the House of Commons in June 2018.

Introduced by Albertan Conservative MP Garnett Genuis, the motion called on the government to "immediately" add the IRGC to its list of terrorist entities. It also strongly condemned Iran for its "ongoing sponsorship of terrorism around the world," and for statements "calling for genocide against the Jewish people."

A year later, Canada added two neo-Nazi and three small Iranian-backed groups to its roster of banned terrorist organizations, but failed to list the IRGC, an elite unit of Iran's armed forces.

At a news conference in Ottawa on Jan. 13, leaders of B'nai Brith, the Council of Iranian Canadians, and the Justice 88 Campaign, urged the government to implement the motion. B'nai Brith said it was giving the government 30 days to designate the IRGC as a terrorist organization.

With that deadline passed, B'nai Brith has launched a legal action against the attorney general and the minister of public safety and emergency preparedness in an attempt to force their hands.

"We made it clear last month that no further delays by the government would be accepted by Canadians," B'nai Brith Canada CEO Michael Mostyn said in a written statement. "Unfortunately, there is no alternative at this point to legal recourse. It is intolerable that 20 months have elapsed since this important motion passed, and no action has been taken by our government to implement it."

The IRGC "poses a very serious security threat to Canadians," Mostyn added. "Listing it as a terrorist entity in this country is necessary to deter this threat and reduce its ability to do harm ... our safety concerns are pragmatic, moral and urgent.

"The government must act immediately – and our lawsuit aims to ensure this immediate action."

Michael Mostyn

The IRGC was responsible for last month's downing of a civilian airplane in Tehran, killing 57 Canadians and another 81 passengers en route to Canada, B'nai Brith pointed out.

The Corps is tasked with "protecting Iran's brutal Islamist dictatorship and supporting its international terrorist proxies," B'nai Brith went on. "Its principle objective is to fuel and fund terrorism. It suppresses Iran's own people and is a serious public security threat throughout the Middle East and around the world."

Qasem Soleimani, who was assassinated in a U.S. drone strike on Jan. 3, was a major general in the IRGC and commander of its Quds Force. In 2012, the previous Conservative government added the Quds Force, a subgroup of the IRGC, to the list of terrorist organizations.

Mostyn noted that in Toronto and other major cities, the IRGC supports the annual al-Quds Day "hatefests that demonize Israel and incite hatred toward Jews."

Genuis's motion also called on the Liberals to abandon promises to restore ties with Tehran, which the previous Conservative government had cut, and their endorsement of the motion was seen as a striking change in Ottawa's Iran policy.

The United States formally listed the IRGC as a terrorist group in April 2019.

The legal instrument B'nai Brith has deployed in this case – an application for mandamus, Latin for "we command" – refers to a writ issued by a court ordering a lower court or governmental entity to properly carry out a duty.

"Mandamus is a drastic remedy and is invoked only in extraordinary cases where there is a clear and indisputable right to the relief sought," according to a definition from Thomson Reuters. ■

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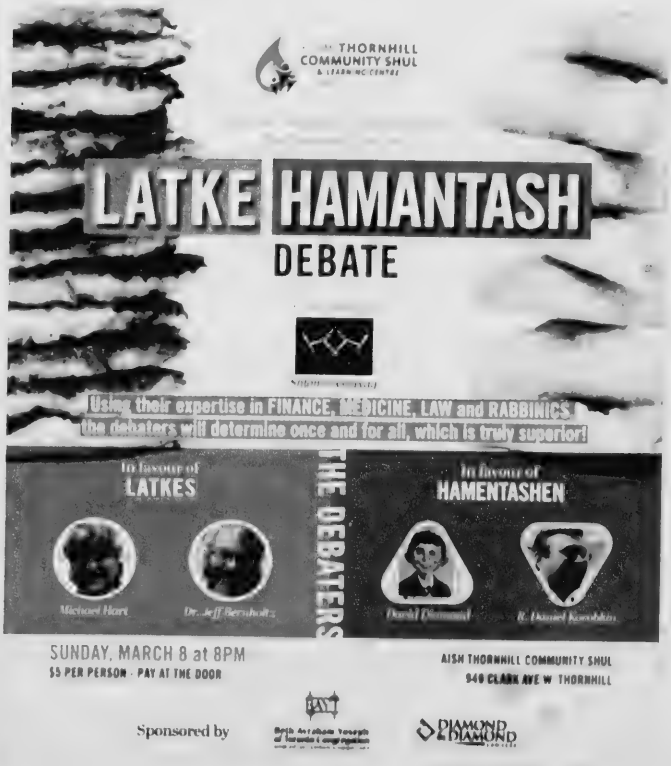
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The woman leading a revolution in Talmud learning

ALEX ROSE
arose@thecjn.ca

On Jan. 5, thousands of Jewish people gathered in a hall in Jerusalem for Siyum HaShas, the celebration marking the completion of the seven-and-a-half year Daf Yomi cycle of Talmud study. That celebration, put on by an organization called Hadran, was one of many at the time; Jewish communities all over the world held similar simchas to honour the achievement. But Hadran's *siyum* was unique because, of its 3,300-plus attendees, almost all of them were women.

Michelle Cohen Farber, co-founder of Hadran, has made it her mission to introduce women to the Talmud. At the beginning of the last Daf Yomi cycle, she set up a class for women in the Tel Aviv suburb of Ra'anana, and also started a podcast explaining each day's page that gets 3,500 downloads a day. She visited Toronto from Feb. 21 to 23, visiting shuls and Jewish schools and homes to inspire women to learn Talmud.

One reason Farber, who is Orthodox, wants to make Talmud accessible for women is because she believes it's an integral part of the Jewish experience, and they're missing out on the full spectrum of Jewish life without it.

"In the modern world, you can't appreciate Judaism without learning," she said. "Nowadays, if you don't understand what you're doing, and you don't feel connected intellectually, many women – I'm not saying everybody, but many women – won't really connect to Judaism, they won't understand. The logic of the Talmud is the logic that our whole religion is based on. And it's a unique logic. And it's a unique way of thinking. And without understanding all of that, it's hard to really understand what Judaism is all about."

Beyond introducing women to the Talmud for their own sake, Farber also thinks it's important to introduce the Talmud to women. She says that women can have a lot to add to the text when they interpret its teachings through the lens of their own experience. That's why Farber is gratified to learn that men are looking up to her as a teacher and listening to her podcast.

"People should be hearing women's interpretation on the topics, women have a different perspective. And the fact that men are listening is amazing because men are hearing women's perspective on these texts, which they've never heard before," she said.

Michelle Cohen Farber

Farber also said teaching women the Talmud gives power and legitimacy to their voices within the community. When conversations are conducted and decisions made in the language of the Gemara, fluency in that language equates to influence, and a lack of it means your voice is silenced. Farber shared a story of a woman who had told her about the debate about a *mechitzah* in her synagogue.

"They were building the shul, and they were talking about the *mechitzah*, and they didn't really take the women into consideration so much. And then she started quoting sources, and they said, 'Oh.' And she was trying to say, 'according to the sources, it doesn't really have to be the way you say.' And then all of a sudden, they started taking her seriously. And it's important that women be part of that," Farber said. "Women gain legitimacy by having knowledge and if they don't have knowledge, it's very hard for them to partake in a good way in the conversations that are shaping our religion."

Farber doesn't just want to teach Talmud to a few curious women. She wants to normalize it within the community. When she asked some girls in a Toronto classroom if there are differences between what the community expects of boys and girls, one girl said that even though everyone learns Gemara in school, her father only studies Gemara with her brother. Farber said the idea that Talmud study isn't meant for girls is "deep-rooted," and that is what she wants to change.

"The real goal is to make change in a much broader way. Because, for example, once your mother's learning Gemara, then as a daughter, you view things differently," she said. "Once women are learning Gemara in the community, the community treats it differently." ■

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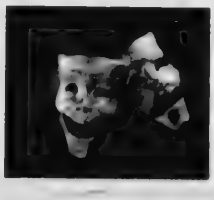

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Fundraising gala will honour synagogue presidents

STEVE ARNOLD
SPECIAL TO THE CJN, HAMILTON, ONT

Synagogue president is one of the toughest jobs in the Jewish world, usually coming with little praise and a double dose of criticism.

Temple Anshe Sholom, Hamilton Ont.'s first synagogue and the oldest Reform congregation in Canada, will try to rebalance that formula on March 28 in a gala event dubbed Past. Presidents. Future.

The fundraising evening will also mark the 100th birthday of Rabbi Bernard Baskin. He held the Anshe Sholom pulpit for a record 40 years, the longest tenure in the synagogue's history.

Over the congregation's 170-year history, 40 men and four women have taken on the job of steering the institution through periods of growth, decline and reshaping.

The job can be so demanding that neither of the two men who currently share it would agree to take it on his own. Acknowledging the people who have provided such leadership, they say, is long overdue.

"Volunteers are a unique group of people, but our presidents take on an entirely different kind of responsibility and we have never celebrated that," said Yves Apel, who is co-president with Mark Levine.

"Being president is like a third level Jewish ninja. It needs stamina, intensity and tact. There is no textbook, so you have to learn on the job," he added.

Anshe Sholom's roster of presidents includes doctors, several lawyers, business owners, real estate brokers, academics and accountants. There's brothers Carl and Dave Loewith, who operate a dairy farm on the outskirts of Hamilton, two father-son presidents (Albert and Jay State and Louis and Harold Minden) and a father-daughter pair, Nicholas Sole and Louise Sole Rotman.

"Until I assumed this mantle I didn't really understand how much work this is," Levine said. "It's almost a full-time job because we have to be hands-on managers as well as strategy people."

Anshe Sholom's roots go back to 1850, when Hamilton's 13 Jewish families started gathering informally to lay the groundwork for a communal life. They were all German – so German in fact that they kept their early records in that language. Most were merchants who had arrived in Canada looking for a life free from prejudice.

In 1853, the group formed the Hebrew Benevolent Society Anshe Sholom of Hamilton. Early gatherings were held in each other's homes, but in 1886 they rented a room above a leather goods store. Almost 20 years later, money was raised to build a temple on Hughson Street South, which was opened in 1882. That building served until 1952 when it was replaced by the present structure on Cline Avenue North.

Edmund Scheuer was the first president of Temple Anshe Sholom.
PHOTO COURTESY TEMPLE ANSHE SHOLOM

Edmund Scheuer, often called the "father of Reform Judaism in Canada," was the first president. Elected in 1873 at age 26, he held the position for the rest of his 13 years in Hamilton.

Among the Temple's 14 religious leaders, names such as Emil Fackenheim who went on to a distinguished career as a professor of philosophy at the University of Toronto and Arthur Feldman, who was a scholar in his own right, stand out. The name towering above all others, however, is Rabbi Bernard Baskin.

During his tenure, it fell to him to lead the congregation through two building campaigns, periods of growth and decline and struggles to redefine the nature of Reform Judaism for a world unimagined by his predecessors.

Those struggles included wrestling with what degree of kashrut would be observed, whether men would cover their heads during worship and how could a younger generation be kept interested in the faith of their parents. ■

Tickets for the event are available at PastPresentsFuture.ca .

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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
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Weird (and maybe true) news from the world of politics

SHAYNA MAIDEL AND OTHERS

CORN FIELD, IOWA - The Iowa Democratic Party, still smarting from its caucus night debacle, where a winner could not be determined at all, has travelled to Israel to see if the Start Up Nation can help.

The Iowa caucus was a "miserable mess," said Democratic insider Hank W., in part because of an untested app, as well as an arcane process that was developed to suit buggy-driving farmers of the 1800s. "We figured those Jews, with all their technological smarts, should be able to help us," Hank said. (He declined to give his full name in embarrassment over the election process.)

But, alas, it was not to be. The Iowans, after surveying Israel's elections, including three in the past 12 months, concluded their system was far superior. The Iowa Democratic Party dove deep into the smoky backrooms where Israel's political slates are first drawn up and where much unproductive haggling has gone on in vain to form a government.

In the end, the Iowans have concluded that their obscure caucus, as humiliating as it was, was superior to having three national elections (as of this writing). For all their high-tech supremacy, Israel still hasn't been able to develop an app that will compel legislators to be reasonable, ethical and to have the best interests of their country at heart.

"We were disappointed," Hank reported. "But after looking at Israel, we realized that some places were way worse off than us."

•••

GOTHAM CITY - The two geriatric front-runners in the Democratic primary settled the issue of who should run for the presidency of the United States, the way all elderly Jewish men deal with significant matters, in the shvitz.

Last week, Bernie Sanders and Michael Bloomberg took to the 92nd Street Y in New York City to hammer out once and for all which one was more fit (or perhaps less feeble).

Dressed in just towels, and in the company of some other members of the tribe, all of whom seemed to be named either Lou or Max, Sanders and Bloomberg finally had it out. They traded notes on who had the best internist, the pros and cons of various cholesterol-reducing drugs (and how the health care system should be funded) and kvetched in general about the lousy low-fat, low-salt diets their political handlers were keeping them on.

Things got a bit heated, so to speak, when Sanders challenged Bloomberg on the state of his stent, but after a brief tussle, the two men reached a conclusion. Emerging from the shvitz (which Bloomberg insisted on calling a sauna), the pair held an impromptu press conference.

Clutching their towels, they announced jointly that they were both resigning from the race and turning it over to healthier, younger people who did not keep a cardiologist on speed dial.

Justin Trudeau

"For the good of the party, and the country, we realize it is foolhardy for us to continue," the duo said. "We're endorsing that cute Mayor Pete and his husband, and whoever else wants to take on that mesheggener Trump."

•••

RIDEAU CANAL - In a show of solidarity with the Jewish community, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has announced that he will not be shaving his beard until after the counting of the *Omer*, the 49 days between Passover and Shavuot, during which time many actions, including shaving, are forbidden. In a statement released on Feb. 30, the Liberal Party of Canada said Trudeau's adherence to the *Omer* is proof of the party's enduring commitment to the interests of the country's Jewish community.

In an inspiring sign of unity, for perhaps the first time ever, every Jewish organization across the country was united in their response: complete condemnation.

"How about instead of growing his beard, he grow some balls and vote with Israel at the UN?" Jewish Interests in Canada spokesperson Avraham Meyer said.

"Does Trudeau really think that his beard can distract us from the fact that observant Jews in Quebec are barred from some of their basic rights, precisely because of the beards they grow?" opined Jewish Civil Liberties Association CEO Joseph Tsvi.

Miriam Yael and Sara Ita, co-founders of Canadian Jews for Justice and Humanity, called out Trudeau for cultural appropriation of a sacred Jewish tradition.

"The *Omer* isn't something you can just opt into by forgetting to shave for a few weeks," their statement said. "It comes from a deep historical tradition rooted in pain and tragedy. But we wouldn't expect an administration that insists on completing Canada's colonization of its Indigenous peoples to understand anything about that."

A silver lining for the Liberal party: there was one Jewish-adjacent group who was thrilled with Trudeau's promise.

"Any time a leader commits to growing out his beard, well, you just know that's someone worthy of your trust!" said Jews for Jesus Winnipeg chair Aron Aharon. ■

New kosher product features meat-based 'vegetables'

CARNIVORE KID

An unlikely assortment of *essers*, *fressers* and *machers* are launching a new kosher food product designed to satisfy the carnivorous cravings of Jews who are feeling low in protein and iron.

Marketed as Beyond Vegetables, the product is a vegetable substitute made 100 per cent out of meat.

Bearing a heksher from "Completely Farblonget," a kosher certification agency that has never accepted a kickback, ever, the food is made out of the choicest leftover meat cuts and put through a patented new machine called the "Vegenator."

Employing the latest developments in food science, and with the blessing of Completely Farblonget's Reb Dreymirkop, the Vegenator crafts the leftover animal-parts into lifelike likenesses of broccoli, cauliflower, carrots and celery. There's even a brussels sprouts setting in which the animal flesh is infused with a patented new enzyme that, when consumed, reproduces the flatulence commonly associated with the vegetable itself, making the culinary experience as realistic as possible.

"This stuff will revolutionize the kosher food industry," said Yossel McNudknik, CEO and chief taste tester at Beyond Vegetables's parent company, Mi Ken Brechen. "You'll never know you're not eating vegetables.

"What makes Beyond Vegetables such a revolutionary product in this day and age in which people want to eat better, is that our food is not only tastier than the real thing, it perhaps, maybe, could be, better for you," he said. "Beyond Vegetables is easier on the *kishkas* than those fibre-filled veggies and contains much more protein, iron and other nutrients our bodies crave," McNudnik said. "What's more," he continued, "it's only fair that we use the word 'vegetables' in our product line after those self-righteous vegetarians appropriated the term 'meat' and used it to sell their flavour-flawed meatless products."

Warming to his subject, McNudnik extolled the virtues of eating select pieces of God's creatures disguised as inanimate vegetable matter.

"Beyond Vegetables tastes so much better than real vegetables that you'll never want to eat that stuff that comes out of the ground covered in dirt ever again," he said. "And it has the added benefit of filling you up so that you're not hungry a couple of hours later."

Introduced about a month before Passover, Beyond Vegetables has a full product line of foods that are certified kosher for the springtime festival.

"You should try our fully meat-based matzoh meal substitute, called Poultry Meal, and use it to make your own matzoh balls," he said. "They go perfectly with our sister company – Beyond Bassar's – meatless chicken soup, made out of vegetables. That way, if you prefer or can't decide, you get both food groups at once."

For the little people, there's a meat-based dipping sauce to complement vegetable-based chicken slices.

"For a limited time, Beyond Vegetables and Beyond Bassar are offering a family take home box – a Freilich Meal – that includes a toy prize that is perfect for either boys or girls or any gender in between. We don't judge," McNudnik said. ■

INTERNATIONAL

Analysis

Under-represented, female voters could decide election

Haviv Rettig Gur
JERUSALEM

Israelis voted again on Monday, just six days before International Women's Day on March 8, in a race that many women's rights advocates consider a step backward for women's representation.

For the first time in 14 years, not a single political party with any realistic chance of making it into the Knesset is led by a woman.

And for the first time since women's representation began to climb in 1999 from a stable 6-10 per cent of Israel's parliament in the country's first five decades to the 20th Knesset's 2018 apex of 29 per cent – that climb has stopped and even reversed.

If the average of the final pre-election polls is proven correct, 26 women will enter the Knesset after Monday's vote, or just under 22 per cent of the parliament's 120 seats. It would mark the first time since 1996 that the number of women in Israel's parliament has gone down.

(Full election results will be available on CJNews.com as they unfold).

Worse, most of those women are not getting elected; they're getting appointed. Blue and White, an alliance of top-down parties where the party leaders select their lists, features just six women in the top 20 slots. Likud, where the list is mostly selected in broad-based party primaries, has just three.

The story is the same across the political spectrum.

Indeed, even in parties where women are well-represented, as in the leftist Labor-Gesher-Meretz, the Arab-majority Joint List and the rightist Yamina (needless to say, women are excluded in principle from the Haredi party slates), they come mostly at the bottom of each list, not at the top, and so are unlikely to win meaningful committee chairs or ministerial posts in the next functioning Knesset.

The trend is so consistent that it's hard to avoid the suspicion that it is intentional, a tactical nod to women voters.

In Yamina, for example, Ayelet Shaked took third place, but one must reach seventh to find the next woman, Idit Silman.

In the Joint List, too, Aida Touma-Sliman and Heba Yazbak hold the fifth and eighth slots respectively, with the next in line, Sundus Saleh and Iman Khatib, coming in at 15 and 16. Joint List has polled at 14 to 16 seats. (In fairness, the present list marks the highest-ever percentage of women in realistic slots for the Arab-majority parties.)

Female activists at Habima Square in Tel Aviv on Feb. 29. AVSHALOM SASSONI/FLASH90 PHOTO

One finds the same clustering of women at the bottom in the large parties as well. Blue and White got 35 seats in April and 33 in September; numbers 36-40 on its list are all women. In Likud, which won 35 and 32, all but one in the 29-35 range are women. While the current caretaker government has an all-time-record four women as ministers, three of them are the ministers of culture and sport, Diaspora affairs and social equality, the most junior ministries available.

Meanwhile, the campaigns of the major parties – Likud and Blue and White – have all but neglected any explicit outreach to women or discussion of women's issues.

Yet, women make up a majority of undecided voters, according to a year-long study of undecided voters by researchers at the Sammy Ofer School of Communications at the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya.

Arguably, in an ideal world, the question of gender representation among lawmakers should matter less than it does. Writ large, the well-being of women is in the overwhelming long-term interest of men. And should the gender of parliamentarians affect the government's capacity to deal seriously with issues that mostly affect just one gender?

In reality, however, at least in the Israeli political experience, it has nearly always been women lawmakers who have championed issues that disproportionately affect women.

Twenty-five years ago, when the Knesset set up a committee to deal with the phenomenon of "honour" murders of women by male family members, it was the efforts of Likud's Limor Livnat and Labor's Yael Dayan that first brought that subject onto the national agenda in a meaningful way.

This reality, that women are needed in parliament to bring meaningful change on issues that disproportionately affect women, hasn't changed in the ensuing years.

The two leading Knessets for women's representation, the 19th and 20th, elected in 2013 and 2015 with 27 and 29 initially-elected women lawmakers apiece, were also the first ones to advance long-delayed and sometimes ahead-of-its-time legislation and policies to help the most marginalized and disadvantaged women in Israeli society.

They included one of the world's first measures outlawing online revenge porn, as well as a measure setting goals for women's representation in local councils.

Perhaps the most dramatic measure advanced almost exclusively by women lawmakers was the December 2018 adoption by Israel of the "Nordic model of state enforcement targeting prostitution, which views the client-prostitute relationship as one of exploitation rather than consent, and penalizes the client rather than the prostitute.

The law passed in December 2018 and is set to go into effect in May of this year. It was the product of an unusual alliance of women: left-wing feminist groups who initiated the bill and lobbied for it over several years, followed by women lawmakers from across the political spectrum.

By the time it became law – in a 34-0 vote, with many of the votes cast by women lawmakers – the 20th Knesset had already dissolved and scheduled new elections in April 2019. But the lawmakers who had worked to forge the new legislation would not let it die with the Knesset's dissolution, and at the persistent urging of Shaked, an informal cross-party coalition of women lawmakers set an unusual recess vote to ensure its passage.

Will the next Knesset, which will see women leaders sidelined by the left's new Labor-Gesher-Meretz alliance, by the centrist coterie of ex-generals who lead Blue and White, and by the longstanding dearth of women leaders in Likud, continue on the 20th Knesset's legislative path?

In their desperate wrangling to emerge on top, Israel's political leaders seem to have forgotten the largest pool of available votes, the ones who could decide their political fate by the time polls close on Monday night. ■

Times of Israel / Timesofisrael.com

Polls in Israel closed after The CJN went to press. For election analysis and commentary see CJNews.com and next week's paper.

Israel's polices undermine youth support: Biden

ERIC CORTELLESSA AND
TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Israel's policies are undermining support for the country in the United States among young people in both political parties, Democratic presidential candidate and former vice-president Joe Biden warned last Sunday in a pre-recorded video address to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee's (AIPAC) annual policy conference in Washington, D.C.

In the speech, Biden warned that any future Israeli annexation of parts of the West Bank along with last week's announcements of construction projects would prevent a future possible contiguous Palestinian state.

"Israel, I think, has to stop the threats of annexation and settlement activity, like the recent announcement to build thousands of settlements in E1," Biden said referring to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's announcement last week that he had ordered the promotion of a plan for some 3,500 homes in the controversial corridor between east Jerusalem and the West Bank Israeli city of Ma'ale Adumim.

Critics charge the project would bisect the western West Bank, substantially curbing the possibility for development in the centre of a future Palestinian state.

"That's going to choke off any hope for peace. And to be frank, those moves are taking Israel further from its democratic values, undermining support for Israel in the United States especially among young people in both political parties," Biden said.

"That's dangerous," he said. "We can't let that happen. We can't let Israel become another issue that divides Republicans and Democrats. We can't let anything undermine the partnership."

Saying that he would "always stand with and for a secure, democratic Jewish State of Israel," the presidential hopeful also called on the Palestinians to "eradicate incitement on the West Bank" and "end the rocket attacks from Gaza."

This year's AIPAC conference has been the subject of controversy with Democratic candidates Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren choosing not to address the policy forum.

Sanders cited his concerns about AIPAC when declining to speak at this year's conference, saying that the organization gives a platform to "express bigotry and oppose basic Palestinian rights."

Joe Biden, seen here in Israel in 2016. MATTY STERN/U.S. EMBASSY PHOTO

> *We can't let Israel become another issue that divides Republicans and Democrats*

Netanyahu on Sunday castigated Sanders for his comments, calling the charge "libellous" and "outrageous."

Addressing the conference via satellite, the Israeli premier urged the 18,000 in attendance to push back against what he characterized as an attempt to diminish U.S.-Israel ties.

"This year AIPAC was accused of providing a platform for bigotry. These libellous charges are outrageous," Netanyahu said. "The best way to respond to that outrage is to do what you have done — by gathering in Washington today, in full force, as Democrats and Republicans. You send a great message to all those who seek to weaken our alliance, that they will fail."

Minnesota senator and Democratic candidate Amy Klobuchar, also addressing the conference via video link Sunday, said she was "committed to a peace process that could lead to a two-state solution that allows Israelis and Palestinians to live side by side in peace and security." ■

Times Of Israel / Timesofisrael.com

Opinion

The safety of the medic before the safety of the patient

Sagi Melamed

I share with you this article written by my son, a combat medic in an elite IDF infantry unit. -S.M

The sun has almost set behind Mount Gilboa. A light breeze ruffles the stalks of unripe wheat in the fields of the valley. Birds return to their nests for the night. Only the concrete wall surrounding the post reminds me I am in an army base.

"Did you check him before you started treating him?" asks my father, reminding me of the mantra he repeats every Sunday morning before I return to base: "Son, protect our homeland, but first protect yourself."

During our combat medics course, the first thing we learned was "the protocol," a set of critical steps one must follow when treating an injured person. We practised it repeatedly in order to avoid going blank in the moment of truth. Step one: take care of your own safety. An injured medic is useless and becomes an additional burden for the fighting unit.

In a few moments of relaxation before our next mission, I pick up a newspaper and glance at the headline: Demonstrations on American Campuses Against Immoral Actions of IDF in the Occupied Territories.

"Walla," I think to myself. "I would love to be a student on an American campus right now. I could quench my thirst with beer at some university kegger or study in a warm library, instead of going out on a rainy night mission."

The company commander stands upright and confident before us, repeats the safety instructions for tonight's operation and reminds us how to react in various situations.

Suddenly, there's a sharp cry: "Medic!" I react automatically and run towards the call. Just outside the base, I spot two young Palestinians. One is lying on the ground, foaming at the mouth, while the other is running around him hysterically calling for help. I approach him quickly, using the basic Arabic I taught myself from YouTube.

It seems the young man has overdosed. I observe his body language, which signals the urgent need for oxygen. I remove the discharge from the patient's mouth to try to clear his airways and lungs. And then comes the breath I was waiting for. Like a midwife watching a baby that has just emerged from its mother's womb, I breathe the first breaths with him.

The commander of the post joins me, and the Palestinian medical team takes over and evacuates the patient to a Palestinian hospital in a Red Crescent ambulance. I fold up the medical equipment that was intended for our night mission and rejoin my unit as we head out.

We return to our base towards morning and I call my parents, knowing they are probably heading to their regular morning workout in the fields. I tell them about the previous night and share the challenges of transitioning between the roles of medic and combat soldier. They listen attentively. After I finish telling my story, my father asks, "Did you check the Palestinian man before you started treating him to make sure he wasn't booby trapped?"

After our conversation, I think of the scores of times we practised treating the injured, and each time I made sure I repeated out loud, "The safety of the medic before the safety of the patient." First comes the medic's safety, and only then the safety of the patient. I watch the first rays of sunlight that herald the new day and wonder, "Why did I skip that step?"

Finally, I come to the conclusion that when I see someone needing help, my first instinct is to give that help. That instinct made me respond immediately while ignoring my training. I promise myself not to make the same mistake again. But I also remember how I was raised, and realize that, in the future, I might once again be liable to violate the protocol, reacting too quickly to care for the injured while forgetting about my own safety. ■

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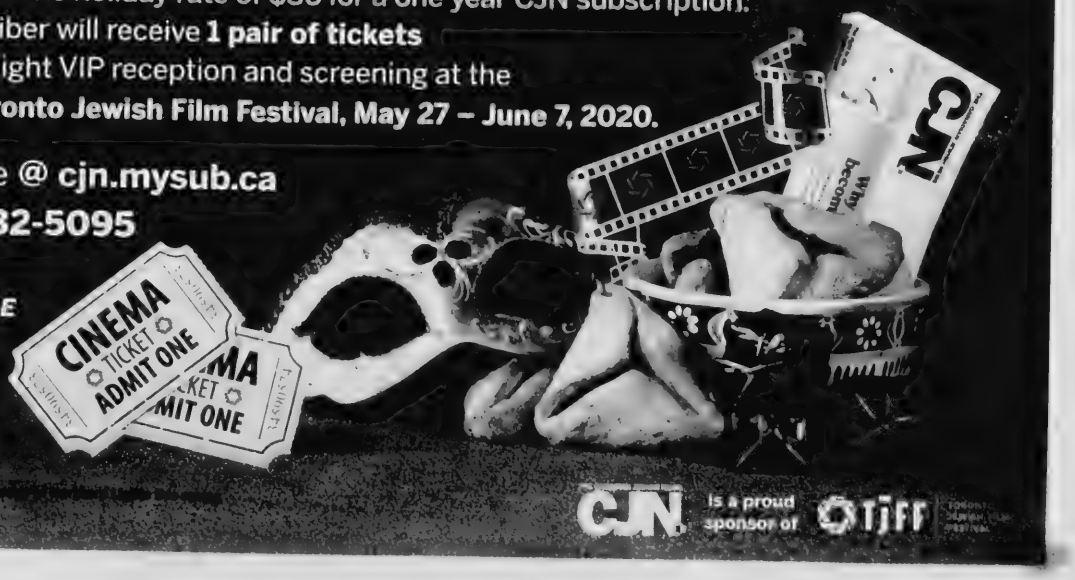

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Top: Translucent cobalt blue glass seder plate with 23 karat gold letters

Far left: Marcela Rosemberg's 2020 Old Jerusalem collection of mezuzot

Left: Marcela Rosemberg at Petroff Gallery showcasing her corset dress created out of fused glass pieces (upper part) and tulle (lower part).

Toronto artist creates Jerusalem-inspired glasswork

SUSAN MINUK
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Artist Marcela Rosemberg has devoted her life to fusing glass. Born in Argentina, Rosemberg is an award-winning glass artist and designer with a global presence. Her newest collection showcases abstract mezuzot.

"Inspired by old Jerusalem, I designed this abstract collection of mezuzahs which is for a more contemporary taste," Rosemberg said. "The mezuzahs are fabricated in aluminum, anodized in silver colour, fused in shiny bold dichroic glass and stainless steel."

"Dichroic glass is glass that displays two different colours by undergoing a colour change in certain lighting conditions," she said. "The custom stainless steel Hebrew letter *shin* can be seen on the front of the mezuzah. *Shin* stands for the word *Shaddai*, a name for God. The outdoor water resistant mezuzah case was built to fit a mezuzah parchment (scroll) of 10 cm (about 4 inches)."

Beauty, simplicity, elegance and functionality are essential components in Rosemberg's designs. She treats glass as if it were a human being, by respecting it and not pushing it, permitting her to understand its flow, displacement, behaviour and action up to its most inner part, its core.

"I always make comparisons about life and glass," Rosemberg said. "Like human beings, glass is strong but fragile. I am enchanted with the image of transparency and light and fire."

At age 61, Rosemberg has been honing her craft for 25 years. Some 16 years ago, she immigrated to Prince Edward Island with only the ocean and her Jewish faith as creative companions. Collaborating with the Atlantic Jewish Council and visiting cruise lines, Rosemberg welcomed tourists to her glass studio and workshop.

Rosemberg's work resides in homes and business spaces throughout the world.

"A little piece of my soul is in Israel," Rosemberg said. "I was contacted by the office of gifts for dignitaries where I was commissioned to design a bowl that our (then) prime minister Stephen Harper and his wife brought with them to Israel, and is now in the home of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu."

Growing up in Buenos Aires, Rosemberg graduated from Panamericana School of Art as an interior designer before pursuing studies in glass craft and design making with renowned artist Rita Neumann.

"Rita gave me the building blocks of a fascinating technique called fused glass," Rosemberg said. "The idea behind fused glass is that art objects can be created by melting glass in a kiln with two or more pieces of glass heated until they fuse together into a single piece. The process is long because each piece remains in the kiln a minimum of 14 hours."

Rosemberg likes to work in shades of blues and greens. "They represent the ocean, holding a special memory of the landscape from my childhood."

The one-of-a-kind contemporary designs are all hand made. "I cut very tiny pieces of glass and assemble and play, like a child. I don't design on paper, rather I place the glass on my design table and move around until the design appears," she says.

"Using a glass-cutter and a glass plier I assemble and place inside the kiln, a special furnace designed to fire glass. I program the kiln to rise very slowly from room temperature up to 800 degrees Celsius - that takes about 14 hours to be fused to be healthy. I remove, wash and align the mezuzah case, glue it on top of the aluminum metal material - and once the mezuzah cover is glued to the case, I place a sheen on top of the glass and let it stand for 24 hours."

Her vast collection includes menorahs, seder plates, matzah plates, mezuzahs, candlesticks, sculptures, bowls, serving pieces, flower vases, knife spreaders, sun catchers, ornaments, paperweights, candle holders and jewelry.

Rosemberg left Prince Edward Island and relocated her glass studio to Cobourg, Ont., before settling in Toronto last March. Her work is displayed throughout Toronto such as at the Petroff Gallery, the Royal Ontario Museum and the Gardiner Museum. Rosemberg was also chosen to design an award for donors of the Canadian Tire Jumpstart Program.

"I created a playground made out of glass," Rosemberg said. "It is one of my most touching ongoing commissions: a park for kids with disabilities." ■

Rosemberg offers citywide workshops in Spanish and English for individuals, families and small groups. Her work is sold at her studio and online www.marcelarosemberg.com.

Exploring Japan's Jewish history

SANDY BORNSTEIN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN KOBE, JAPAN

Finding threads of Jewish history can sometimes feel like a treasure hunt. Wars, natural disasters and fading memories can destroy physical records and the ability to reconstruct history. However, the dedication of a few willing to preserve the past can make it possible to piece together a handful of history chapters.

On a recent trip to Kobe, Japan, my husband and I were fortunate to accompany Prof. Takayoshi Iwata as he pointed out bits and pieces of Jewish history. Iwata, a retired school principal, was the former director of the Kazamidori House, a popular tourist spot. He simultaneously taught college-level classes focusing on Kobe's history. A visit to the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles ignited his interest in the Holocaust, and thereafter, he researched the Jews of Kobe. Acknowledged as an expert, he authored Japanese books about the Jews who lived in Kobe as well as the history of Kobe.

In pre-Second World War Europe, Jews who heeded the warnings searched for avenues of escape. A few thousand were able to connect with Chiune Sugihara, a Japanese diplomat stationed in Lithuania. He issued transit visas to Polish Jews who sought his assistance. Many of these refugees, along with other Jews, sailed in boats headed to Tsuruga, Japan.

The sanctuary at the Ohel Shelomo Synagogue SANDY BORNSTEIN PHOTOS

After arriving in Japan, an unknown number were transported by train to Kobe and Yokohama. In Kobe, the small Jewish community welcomed these immigrants who had limited resources and few offers for safe havens. The Jews who made up the existing Jewish community had found their way to Kobe after the major Japanese ports were open to foreign traders in the mid-19th century.

Iwata's research has revealed that Kobe's German population in the 1930s and 1940s was small, and there was no evidence of anti-Semitism in the town. The local authorities allowed the Jewish refugees to remain in Kobe under special conditions even though their short-term visas had expired and they were legally subject to deportation.

By taxi, we accompanied Iwata up the hilly roads of Kobe. He wanted to show us some locations where the pre-war Jews resided in cramped quarters. While the living conditions were far from ideal, these Jews were far better off than their relatives and friends who were left behind in Europe.

Our first stop was in a remote area of Kobe called Umadome. Standing outside a western-style brown and white multi-story home set upon a rocky platform, Iwata mentioned that recent research indicates that 39 refugees had resided in the house.

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We hopped back into the taxi and headed up a narrow, steep hill to an area called Kitano-cho. As we walked through this quiet residential neighbourhood, Iwata shared snippets from oral testimonies about the people who sought refuge here. He pointed out the former residences of Rahmo Sasson and Isaac Alfred Ailion. Far removed from their home countries, European Jewish refugees had no idea what was happening during the Nazi reign.

Iwata treated us to a panoramic view of the city at the Shinto shrine Tenman Zinzya. We accessed this vantage point by climbing up stone steps with high risers.

During the Second World War, the Jewish community's centre was located near another shrine, the Ichinomiya Shinto Shrine. During the bombings, just about everything was destroyed except for a few shrines. We could only imagine the place where thousands of Jewish refugees were supported by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). As I have seen in other locations, the JDC provided food, shelter and resources for war refugees. We stood next to a dull, worn-out sign stating, "Center Jewish Community of Kansai." Iwata referred to this site as JEWCOM.

On April 20, 2020, a commemorative signboard will be installed on the site of JEWCOM. The city of Kobe will be covering part of the cost. Iwata has been asked to write the wording for this signboard. Honoured guests at the celebration ceremony will include Kobe's mayor, a representative of the Foreign Ministry, a diplomat from the Polish Embassy and a survivor saved by Sugihara.

Refugee photo in front of shrine where the photo was taken

At the nearby shrine, we met with the Shinto priest Oomi Yamamoir. He was born in 1937 and raised at the small Ichinomiya Shinto Shrine, which dates back to approximately 300 CE. He studied the history of Jews before the Second World War and started collecting photos of the Jewish community, including a few provided by the Hyogo Prefectural Museum. Yamamoir shared a notebook filled with black and white images depicting Jewish life in the 1940s.

As the war progressed, the safety of the Jews was not guaranteed in Kobe. The Jews who were unable to obtain visas for another country were deported to Japanese-occupied Shanghai, where they remained far removed from the Holocaust.

Two tangible aspects of Jewish life remain visible in Kobe today. The Ohel Shelomo Synagogue currently serves the small Jewish community. Even though we had an appointment with, American born, Rabbi Shmuel Vishedsky, he was unfortunately detained due to a congregant's emergency. He relocated to Kobe six years ago because the congregation needed a leader. It was a good fit because his brother-in-law, Rabbi Mendi Sudakevich is the Chabad director in Tokyo.

Without a guided tour, we merely strolled around inside. I eventually connected with Rabbi Vishedsky by e-mail. He encourages visitors to consider attending services and to join with the local community at synagogue meals. However, it is always recommended to contact international synagogues before arrival.

In order to reach the Foreigners' Cemetery before it closed, it was not possible to wait for the rabbi. Iwata had arranged special access with the city to enter, so we could not be late. The taxi wound its way through forested terrain filled with switchbacks and deep ravines. It was a bit odd to drive through a nature preserve to reach the Shiogahara Foreign Cemetery which is the final resting place for approximately 2,100 people, including 127 Jewish graves. Records indicate that the first Jew, Alfred Singleton, was buried there on Oct. 27, 1869.

Drops of rain started splashing on the ground as we entered a metal gate decorated with Magen Davids. The rolling landscape was conducive to a tiered burial arrangement. Older gravestones tended to be engraved in Hebrew, while the more recent graves were in English or a combination of English and Hebrew. Adjacent plots of land partitioned by fences contained Muslim and Christian gravestones.

Like many good mysteries, we returned to our cruise ship with more questions than answers. If we could read Japanese, the missing facts might fall into place after reading the two books that Iwata handed to us at the port. Perhaps, one day, more points will be revealed to an English-speaking audience. ■

Sandy Bornstein is an award-winning travel and lifestyle writer. Goldberg on Travel arranged the writer's private tour with Prof. Takayoshi Iwata.

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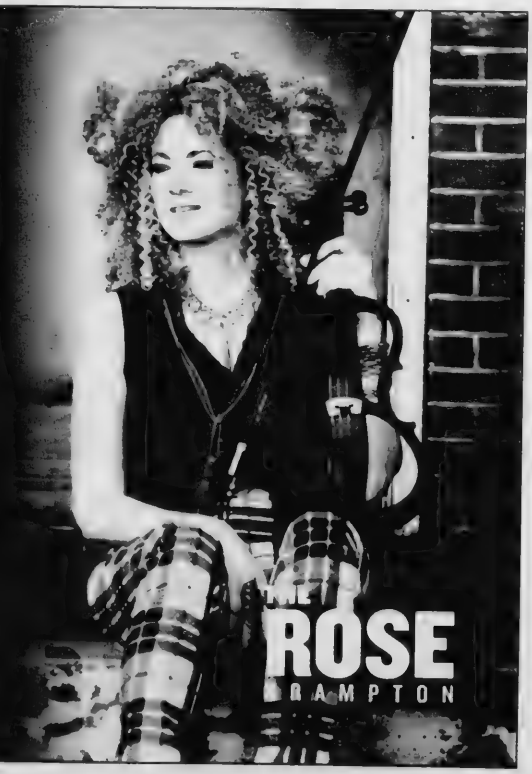

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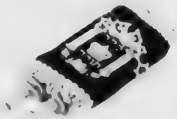

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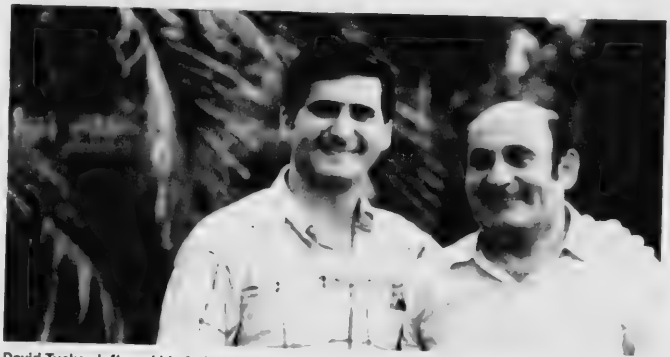
Author recalls an operatic father-son struggle in new memoir



David Tucker, left, and his father Richard, the famous opera singer. DAVID TUCKER PHOTO

MICHAEL FRAIMAN
mfraiman@thecjn.ca

David Tucker never wanted to be a doctor. Growing up, he idolized his father and wanted to be exactly like him. He wanted to sing in front of thousands of fans, enjoy international fame and live the life of a renowned globetrotting opera singer, just like his dad, Richard Tucker, the famous operatic tenor of postwar America.

"It was living in Camelot," David Tucker says of his upbringing. He witnessed his father sing before five U.S. presidents over three decades at New York's Metropolitan Opera House, playing lead roles in performances such as *Aida*, *La Gioconda* and *Pagliacci*.

"I think it has an effect on some children, especially me, to want to be like your dad," David Tucker says.

His father, however, had other plans. He insisted young David become a doctor, and refused his son's every attempt to follow in his footsteps, despite David enjoying a strong singing voice with some promise of a professional career.

"He really, with all his success, felt that being a doctor was more noble," Tucker recalls. "He also worried that the road to success in entertainment is a crooked path, based on luck and timing."

Years later, after Tucker retired from medicine and his father had long since passed away, he recalled this story to a former patient of his, Rabbi Alfred Gottschalk. Rabbi Gottschalk commented on how many stories Tucker has of his father, and casually suggested he write a book about the relationship.

Tucker thought that wasn't a bad idea.

That book, *The Hard Bargain: Music, Medicine and My Father (Richard Tucker, Opera Legend)*, was released last year, self-published through the platform Xlibris.

"I've written medical papers, but this was an exhausting experience," Tucker says of the creative process. He worked with a co-author, Burton Spivak, to complete the project. The pair spent hundreds of hours talking, editing and marketing the book to get it where it is now. "I'm not the type of person who meditates or looks in the rearview mirror, but I had to do that to write this in an honest way."

The book focuses on the titular bargain: Tucker's deal with his dad. "The hard bargain was that my father demanded that I become a doctor," Tucker says. They made a deal: Richard would pay for his son's singing lessons if his son agreed to study medicine.

Tucker spent years finding ways to express his artistic ambitions on the side. A native New Yorker, he sang at bar mitzvahs and on the street, hanging out around Broadway and Times Square, studying music in his spare time and even performing in a few off-Broadway productions during his years at Cornell University's medical school.

He mostly resented being forced into the medical world until his fourth year of school, when lab work finished and he got to spend time with actual patients. Having a human connection made him suddenly fall in love with the medical profession, and in fact, it was music that drew him to ophthalmology.

Cornell's chief of ophthalmology heard Tucker sing and, impressed, invited him to stop by his office to discuss his future. As they discussed new experiments in retinal and cataract surgery, Tucker became convinced to pursue that path. In the end, that's what won him his father's approval.

"The struggle was pretty significant in wanting my father's blessing," Tucker recalls. "But in the end, I knew that he was right." ■

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Loafing around at Purim

RANDY FINGRUT
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Although the story of Purim (Megillat Esther), is anything but funny, the Jewish people have developed a wonderful sense of humour that comes out best at Purim. The old adage, "They tried to kill us, we survived, let's eat!" stands true. After all, the Jews did not survive 3000 years by missing meals, or especially by missing desserts!

Here is my attempt at some Purim humour. My jokes are a barrel of loafs, you are sure to burst out loafing and you will doubled up with loafter. Here we go:

My dessert went missing, somebody took my Tropical Lemon Loaf. Out of everything that happened today, that really took the cake! Everyone told to stop making cake jokes, but I could tell they were just having a loaf. And if loafing is wrong, I don't want to be right. See Purim is really good for a loaf!

Tropical Lemon Loaf Cake and Mandarin Loaf Cake, you are the loaf of my life. I loaf you so much! And so will you! ■

Mandarin Orange Loaf Cake

- 3 295 ml (10 ounce) cans mandarin orange slices
- 250 ml (1 cup) reserved juice
- 2 eggs
- 250 ml (1 cup) margarine
- 375 ml (1½ cups) sugar
- 750 ml (3 cups) flour
- 10 ml (2 tsp) baking powder
- 10 ml (2 tsp) baking soda
- 2 ml (½ tsp) salt

Glaze
45 ml (3 tbsp) reserved juice for cake
63 ml (¼ cup) icing sugar
15 ml (1 tbsp) reserved juice
Mandarin orange slices from third can for garnish

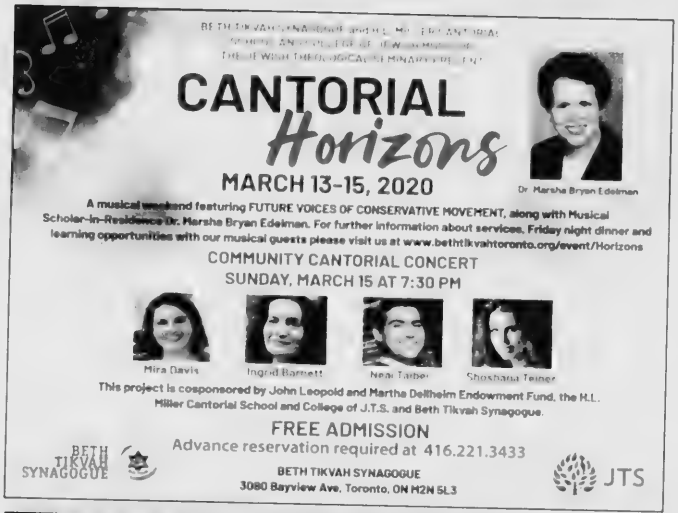
Prepare a loaf pan with Canola oil spray. Preheat oven to 180 C (350 F). Take first two cans of mandarin oranges, drain and reserve juice. In food processor pulse mandarin oranges until finely chopped. Add in egg, margarine, juice and sugar. Pulse until combined. Add in dry ingredients and pulse just until combined. Fill prepared loaf pan just past the halfway point. Bake loaf cake 45 to 55 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the centre of the loaf comes out clean. Cool and remove from pans. Open and drain the third can of mandarin oranges, reserving liquid. Using a fork, gently poke rows into top of the cake. Spoon 45 ml (3 tbsp) of the reserved juice over the prepared holes. Mix glaze ingredients until smooth. Drizzle glaze over the top of the cakes. Garnish with remaining mandarin orange slices. Serve immediately or wrap well and serve within two days. Freezes well. (If you have extra batter prepare a few cupcakes, bake for 20 minutes.)

Tropical Fruit Lemon Loaf

- 250 ml (1 cup) unsalted butter or vegan margarine
- 250 ml (1 cup) sugar
- 4 eggs
- 45 ml (3 tbsp) lemon juice
- Lemon zest from two lemons
- 5 ml (1 tsp) pure vanilla
- 500 ml (2 cups) flour
- 5 ml (1 tsp) baking powder
- 0.5 ml (1/8 tsp) salt
- 375 ml (1½ cups) tropical dried fruit mix, diced, or combination of raisins, diced dried pineapple, papaya, banana chips and coconut flakes.

Glaze
62 ml (¼ cup) icing sugar
15 ml (1 tbsp) lemon juice
Assorted tropical dried fruit for garnish

Prepare a loaf pan with Canola oil spray. Preheat oven to 180 C (350 F). In a large bowl or food processor, combine butter and sugar until light. Add in eggs and mix or process until well combined. Combine in lemon juice, zest and vanilla. Remove 15 ml (1 tbsp) of flour from the measured flour and toss with the tropical dried fruit. Set aside. Add in remaining dry ingredients to the mixture and gently combine until smooth. Fold dried tropical fruit into batter. Pour mixture, just over the halfway point, into the prepared pan. Bake for 1¼ hours or until a toothpick inserted in the centre of the loaf comes out clean. Remove from oven. Let cool and remove from loaf pan. Combine glaze ingredients. Whisk until smooth. With a fork, poke holes in rows over the top of the loaf and drizzle glaze over the loaf. Garnish with dried fruits when serving. Serve immediately or wrap well and serve within two days. Freezes well. (If you have extra batter prepare a few cupcakes, bake for 20 minutes).


CANTORIAL
Horizons
MARCH 13-15, 2020
Dr. Marsha Bryan Edelman
A musical weekend featuring FUTURE VOICES OF CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT, along with Musical Scholar-in-Residence Dr. Marsha Bryan Edelman. For further information about services, Friday night dinner and learning opportunities with our musical guests please visit us at www.bethtikvahtoronto.org/event/Horizons
COMMUNITY CANTORIAL CONCERT
SUNDAY, MARCH 15 AT 7:30 PM
Mira Davis
Ingrid Barnett
Neal Taiber
Shoshana Teiner
This project is cosponsored by John Leopold and Martha Dellheim Endowment Fund, the H.L. Miller Cantorial School and College of J.T.S. and Beth Tikvah Synagogue.
FREE ADMISSION
Advance reservation required at 416.221.3433
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3080 Bayview Ave, Toronto, ON M2N 5L3
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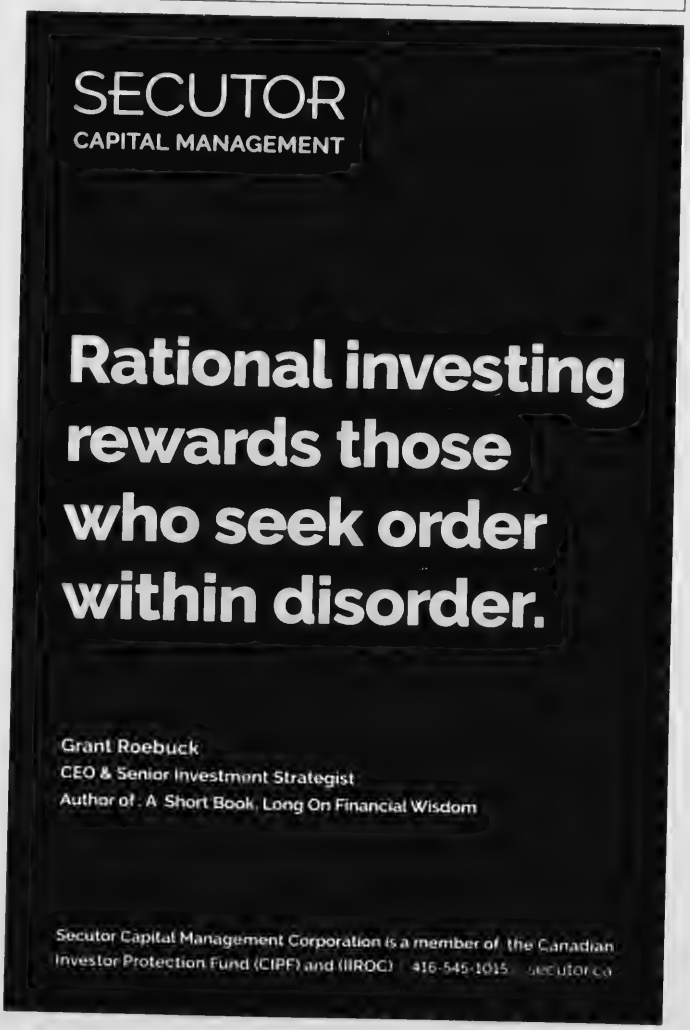
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Lovely poems that get in your way

NORMAN RAVVIN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

A good poet gets in our way. His language calls for some kind of pause – not necessarily to struggle with comprehension or form – but with our regular way of going about things. Adam Zagajewski, who was born and raised in Poland, and who then lived abroad for many years, has returned to Krakow, in part to recall, in poetry, the interruptions and reroutings of his life.

According to Zagajewski, in his recent book *Asymmetry: Poems*, the penchant for interrupting the everyday underwrites the poet's task. Poets, he tells us,

"listen to the whispers of broad, lowland rivers./ They admire birds in flight, calm suburban gardens,/ high-speed trains rushing breathlessly ahead./ The scent of fresh, hot bread drifting / wafting from a bakery/ stops them in their tracks,/ as if they'd just remembered something vital."

He's aware, too, of our custom of paying a poet's labours little attention: "Each poem has to speak / of the world's wholeness; alas, our / minds are elsewhere."

After years abroad, teaching at universities in the United States and living in Europe, Zagajewski's recent collection portrays his return to the Poland of his youth, and often hovers over the postwar years when the worst was past but what was yet to come remained unforeseeable.

Zagajewski's family was forced west to the Upper Silesian city of Gliwice from their home in what was the city of Lvov in Poland (modern day Lviv, Ukraine) as part of the repatriations and depopulations at war's end. Of this period he writes:

"forgetting triumphed in the end,/ forgetting, round as a ball,/ sweet as a strawberry, / final as judgment."

Zagajewski's mother and father appear in shadowy tableaux, as he recalls long-ago walks "above a muddy stream," the water penetrated by "Canadian thyme ... an invasive species." His poems recover glancing bits of their talk; his mother warns him, "you'll be sorry someday, when I'm not around anymore."

The life of the poet's mother is haunted by war – he cryptically recalls that he "couldn't admire her during the war," while neglecting to tell us why this is. Her death on the street next to Gliwice's infamous radio tower, where events led to the war's outbreak, represents to him

Asymmetry: Poems
By Adam Zagajewski

Farrar, Straus and Giroux

> *. . . since wars conclude with death and proclamations, though silence always has the last word.*

"...the war's true end,/ since wars conclude with death and proclamations,/ though silence always has the last word."

Zagajewski's sketches of his youth, in the grey Silesian city and then as a student in wondrous, ancient Krakow, include discovering Charlie Parker, the temptation of a "bookshop display" and a "teacher of false history with a vulture's sharp face." These are some of the fragments of a youth spent under communism, which return to him like

"a jungle, a splendid chaos that you spend/ the rest of your life trying to comprehend, to organize,/ in vain."

Poland's prewar Jewish character enters his poems as a counterpoint to the other narratives. The death of a friend, who was a child in the war, calls up a memory of a story she told of the Tarnopol Ghetto

"...Once only she told us this story: her beloved cat wouldn't stay in the ghetto, twice/ it went back to the Aryan side at night. Her cat/ didn't know who Jews were, what the Aryan side meant./ It didn't know, so it shot to the other side like an arrow."

In contemporary Poland, Zagajewski is beset not just by memory but by the fall out of a new divisive politics of identity under a hard-right national government. "Mourning for a Lost Friend" is not a poem about death, but one that addresses political arguments so wounding that friendships fail. "My friend fell in love with the nation" Zagajewski writes, "(he's) been seized by a deep political tide."

Lightening *Asymmetry* are poems that invoke music, from Bach to Charlie Parker, along with Zagajewski's love affair with the light and heat of southern climes, which from time to time draw the poet from his "northern cities" with "their dirty underwear of melting snow."

Near the end of the volume, Zagajewski sets down fragments from an "Orange Notebook," which help break the rhythm of nostalgia and loss:

"A June storm blesses the train. A pheasant lands heavily/ in a wheat field, like the first helicopter .../ Express train, June, a calm evening, the light retreats/ peaceably. Deer beside the forest. Happiness."

Asymmetry is an autumnal collection. On its dust jacket is a silvery photograph of two elderly people, set on its side, as if to obscure its content. The subject of the photo must be the parents remembered in the poems, but our only evidence of this is a note on the jacket acknowledging it to be "courtesy of the author." ■

Norman Ravvin is a writer and teacher in Montreal. His recent novel, The Girl Who Stole Everything, *is set in Poland and Vancouver.*

CORRECTION

The photo captions in the article "Millennial adventure set during Rob Ford scandal" in the Feb. 27 *CJN* were incorrect. They should have said, "Director and writer Ricky Tollman, left, with film producer Randy Manis." *The CJN* apologizes for the error.

Opinion

Comic rabbi seeks soulful laughs

Mark Breslin

In a world of multi-position jobs, rabbi/comedian may be a rarity – not unheard of, though.

Jackie Mason trained as a cantor before deciding jokes yielded a larger congregation. David Steinberg, the pride of Winnipeg, studied at a yeshivah in Israel before chucking it for high-level laughs in Chicago. And in Los Angeles, comedian/rabbi Bob Alper is a constant presence on the comedy scene.

Now meet David Kilimnick, the No.1 rabbi/comedian in Israel. OK, he may be the only rabbi/comedian in Israel, but it's no less of an achievement. Kilimnick is an American who made aliyah a few decades ago and opened up Jerusalem's only full-time comedy club, Off the Wall (a great pun, if you think about it).

I visited that club on a trip to Israel. It's small and a bit rundown, but there's no question it serves an audience hungry for English-speaking comedy. Megastars such as Jim Gaffigan have played there, and although Kilimnick and I got into a friendly disagreement on the use of foul language, I thought he was doing great work bringing humour to a place always in need of some release.

Now Kilimnick is on a tour of North America, which will bring him to Yuk Yuk's Toronto on March 8 and Temple Sinai on March 9.

Kilimnick received his rabbinical training at Yeshivat HaMivtar in Gush Etzion, but he's originally from Rochester, N.Y., where, he says, "Kodak was doing real bad and I wanted to get out of there before they started blaming it on the Jews."

At the yeshivah, he performed at a Purim showcase and found he caught the bug. "I knew I wanted to do comedy," he said. "I like truth. I find almost everybody to be spending their whole lives hiding from that. Comedy is the one place I can connect with people on that level. Maybe it's a piece of heaven on earth. But when the show goes badly, it's hell!"

In these words you can hear Rabbi David trying to bring a spiritual dimension to the world of standup – a dimension you rarely hear.

Kilimnick is middle-aged, and he's part of a worldwide initiative of modern Jewish comics to appeal to a contemporary demographic. In Israel, he says, "The younger generation over here is really cool. They can take it. They're used to terror attacks, and they can even joke about that."

Kilimnick's act is squeaky clean and family-friendly, but doesn't shy away from controversial topics, especially in defence of Israel. "I talk about Jewish life and community, family, being single, Israel, all the good and bad of it all," he says. "I defend Israel and the Middle East against all the people who don't understand how amazing it is. And I'll deal with some of our beautiful religious traditions as I try to impress the matchmakers in the crowd."

When I visited Israel with a number of Canadian comics a decade ago, there wasn't much of an English-speaking comedy scene there. But according to Kilimnick, things have changed.

"In Jerusalem, the comedy is very raw and passionate. In Tel Aviv, they're more cool and laid-back. Personally, I like it raw. There's a lot of satire and societal critique that is making its way into Jerusalem comedy."

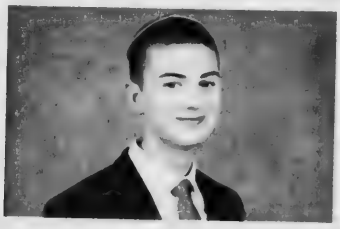
Historically, slapstick and silly comedy dominated the early years of Israeli comedy, as befits a new struggling nation that needed an escape from the constant hardships. Now, it seems, Israeli standup has become more sophisticated and focuses a lot on observational and personal issues. It seems like it's ready for the world stage.

I asked Kilimnick the million-dollar question: what the rabbinate and standup have in common.

"Truth," he responded. "We affectionately refer to the Torah as truth. Comedy is only funny if it is true. I feel that if I'm sharing truth, I am doing holy work. And that is only done when speaking to people's souls. The soul is what I want to connect to and the soulful laughs are the kind of laughs I want to share." ■

Mark Breslin is the co-founder of Yuk Yuk's comedy clubs.

Mazel tov to Katherine Liv Shtein on her bat mitzvah! We wish you much happiness and many blessings on such a special day. Love, your family and friends



Mazel Tov to Coby on his Bar Mitzvah February 29 We are very proud of you! Love, your family

Mazel tov to Norman and Sally Raicek of Montreal, who recently celebrated 68 years of marriage, surrounded by their children! Best wishes for good health and happiness together

Happy 70th anniversary to our parents/grandparents/great-grandparents Helen and Irving Bernstein. With lots of love, David and Ellen, Gail, Marla and Albert and our families.

Bill Mondrow celebrated his milestone 90th birthday on Feb. 20, 2020. Mazel tov and love from your family

Parashah

Tetzaveh | Book 2/5 27:20-30:10

Rabbi Becca Walker considers the meaning of Aaron's priestly wardrobe
Sharon Fixler says one's motives must be pure in order to be effective
Rabbi Yoseph Y. Zaltzman wonders why Moses' name went missing

Rabbi Becca Walker

It's fitting that my first column for *The CJN* happens to be for my bat mitzvah Torah portion, but I will spare you my original speech.

In Parashat Tetzaveh, the Torah describes the priestly garments, including the *hoshen ha-mishpat* (breastplate of judgment), which Aaron and future high priests consulted when faced with a decision. It was adorned with 12 gemstones engraved with the names of the 12 tribes of Israel. Inside the breastplate were the *urim* and *tumim*, mysterious objects that served as a way to obtain an oracle. The Talmud in Tractate Yoma describes them as working to light up the letters of the names of the tribes to spell out an answer, sort of like an ancient Ouija board.

Yet, if the breastplate was meant to help relay messages, wouldn't it have been easier for it to contain the letters of the Alef Bet, rather than the names of the tribes?

Exodus 28:29 reads, "Aaron shall carry the names of the sons of Israel in the breastplate of judgment over his heart, when he enters the sanctuary, for remembrance before the Lord at all times." These names function as a reminder for Aaron about the people he serves. I imagine it could be easy for Aaron to get absorbed by his many responsibilities. Here, Aaron literally wears a visual aid that helps him stay connected to the nation served by the rituals he performs.

Aaron is privileged to have a piece of clothing to serve as a reminder. I don't have a cool breastplate (or normal shirt, for that matter) that helps me recall the important people in my life. In our lives, it can be so easy to become overwhelmed by the little details that make up our days, and become detached from the people or purpose behind it all. This parashah, and Aaron's wardrobe, can be a reminder for us to step back and take a moment to reflect on why we spend time on the things that we do, and who we do it for. ■

Rabbi Becca Walker is the engagement rabbi at Beth David B'nai Israel Beth Am in Toronto.

Sharon Fixler

This week's Torah portion, Tetzaveh, offers a great lesson in how we deal with interpersonal relationships from a seemingly unlikely source: the description of the type of oil used to light the seven-branched menorah in the Mishkan (Tabernacle).

The verse describing the oil states: "They shall take for you pure, pressed olive oil for illumination" (Exodus 27:20). The Midrash Tanchuma questions why pure, pressed olive oil is required here, when the oil is not being ingested, yet the oil used for the meal offering, which is consumed, does not require such a degree of purity.

On this point, Rabbi Eliyahu Meir Kovner interestingly explains that this distinction teaches that there is a difference whether one is acting for oneself or on behalf of others. He notes that the meal offering is a personal contribution that is eaten by the one who offers it. Thus, when it concerns oneself, the Torah does not demand that the oil must be of the highest quality. The menorah, however, is very different, since its designation is to illuminate the world, and its oil serves a purpose for others. As Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum explains: "When one seeks to brighten the hearts and lives of others, he must use the clearest, purest and finest quality 'oil.' "

Furthermore, we learn from here that our actions in helping others should be with the purest of intentions. To be fully effective, one's motives must be pure and, in fact, altruistic.

Interestingly, Elizabeth Midlarsky, professor of psychology and education at Columbia University, observes that philosophers and those studying animal behaviour speculate that a species marked more by altruism than by aggression has a better chance to survive. She says, "From a psychological perspective … phenomena such as nurturance and courageous compassion are prosocial (altruistic) behaviours that can be taught and developed in the home and in the school."

May we use the lesson of the menorah's oil in this week's parashah to help ourselves and those around us cultivate a true sense of altruism. ■

Sharon Fixler is an assistant principal at Ulpanat Orot, part of Bnei Akiva Schools of Toronto.

Rabbi Yoseph Y. Zaltzman

This week's Torah portion contains somewhat of a mystery. Someone is missing. The name of Moses, mentioned in every Torah portion since his birth, does not appear even once. Even though he plays a central role in the activities and rituals described in the verses, he is referred to simply as "you." Compounding the mystery is the odd fact that this particular portion is generally read on or around the birthday and yahrzeit (date of passing) of Moses, the seventh of Adar.

Following the sin of the Golden Calf, God threatened to destroy the nascent Israelite nation and build a new nation from Moses and his descendants. Moses intervened and proclaimed that if the nation is not forgiven, then "erase me from Your book." The people were forgiven. Nevertheless, since Moses was a powerful and special individual, his every word is fulfilled in some way, and so his name was "erased" from this parashah.

Still, we have to wonder, what is the meaning behind the missing name? And why here, specifically in this portion, where Moses' participation in the preparation of the Tabernacle (the precursor to the Temple) and the inauguration of its priests is so central?

The Hebrew letters that form the name of any object or person are a reflection of its spiritual essence, the divine energy that gives it life. At the same time, a name is merely an expression of that spiritual essence required for interactions with others, but not the essence itself.

By addressing Moses as "you," the Torah indicates that what is transpiring – the establishment of the Temple and the priesthood – is dependent on Moses in his essence, a reality in which he is one with the Divine, the Torah and the people. This also explains the deeper meaning of Moses' request "erase me from Your book." He wanted to reach a place of transcendence and oneness where essence connects to essence, a place of innocence and purity where all is forgiven – which is also what the Temple is all about. ■

Rabbi Yoseph Y. Zaltzman is the founder and senior rabbi of the Jewish Russian Community Centre of Ontario.

Social Scene

Coco Goldstein

Nif, Naf, and Noof Nahapetyan

Lucy Semtchenko

Party at The CJN

On Sunday night, the beloved pets of *The Canadian Jewish News* staff snuck out of their owners' houses, broke into *The CJN*'s Toronto office and, unbeknownst to the entire company, held a surprisingly tasteful late-night Purim party. Bone marrow hors d'oeuvres and fried tuna fillets accompanied the free-flowing open bar that left no maw unsatisfied. Waking up Monday morning, *The CJN*'s human staff were briefly worried about the seeming disappearance of their little ones, until they walked into the office later that morning and found the animals dry-mouthed and hungover, screeching when someone flicked on the lights. ■

Winnie Burakowski

Koya Meitz

Katy Collins

Binx Freid

Indy Meitz

Heidi Heilbronn

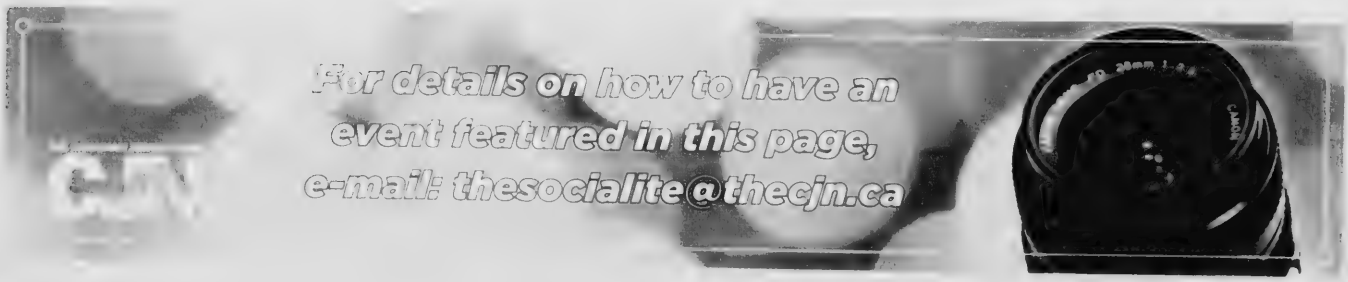
Tobi Tobias

Luna Meitz

Tommy Pickles Sarick

Kenzo Abrahamyan

CJN STAFF PHOTOGRAPHY



What's New

MARCH 5 - 12

by Lila Sarick

Thursday, March 5

SCIENCE MEETS THE BIBLE
Stephen Kraft discusses "Kabbalah, Geometry and Modern Geography." 7:30 p.m., Beth David

SEX, VIOLENCE IN THE MEGILLAH
Rabbi Denise Handlarski of Oraynu Congregation for Humanistic Judaism discusses "Sex and Violence in the Megillah," 7:30 p.m., Quaker Friends House, 60 Lowther Ave. RSVP: 416-285-3910 or info@oraynu.org. $15.

ISRAELI ELECTION RESULTS
Simon Rosenblum discusses "Understanding the Israeli Election Results." 7:30 p.m., Holy Blossom Temple. Sponsored by Canadian Friends of Peace Now. Free.

BEREAVEMENT GROUP
Circle of Care begins an eight-session bereavement support group for family loss (siblings, adult children, parents), 1:30-3 p.m., Temple Sinai. Free. Register with **Charlotte**, 416-635-2860 ext. 271.

Saturday, March 7

DISNEY PURIM AND HAVDALAH
Temple Sinai celebrates with a Disney Purim and special *Havdalah* ceremony, 4:30-6:30 p.m. $10/$15 per family. RSVP by March 6: 416-487-4161.

NEIL SEDAKA SHABBAT
The Song Shul celebrates Neil Sedaka's birthday and melodies, led by **Cantor Simon Spiro** and the Toronto Festival Singers, 9 a.m., Bialik Hebrew Day School, 2760 Bathurst St. Free, but ticket required: songshul.com.

Deadline:
The deadline for the March 19 paper is March 9.
All deadlines are at noon.
Phone: 416-391-1836 ext. 269;
email: **whatsnewcjn@gmail.com**.

A sweet time

Anna R., Andrew G., and Rafi B. from DANI package mishloach manot for Purim. DANI will be selling gift baskets before Purim. ANDREW LASZLO TWINS PHOTO AND VIDEO

Sunday, March 8

SPIRITUAL PREP FOR PURIM
Join **Aviva Chernick** as she guides participants through "song and silence" in a reflection on Purim, 10 a.m., Beth Tzedec.

PURIM FESTIVAL
Oraynu Congregation for Humanistic Judaism holds a family Purim festival, 10 a.m., Borochov Cultural Centre, 272 Codsell Ave. RSVP: 416-285-3910.

CAVALCADE OF STARS
Enjoy an evening of Jewish music, featuring the Shul of Rock and Benami Band, in support of Jews for Judaism, 6:30 p.m., Shaarei Shomayim Congregation. $25 per person, $39 per couple, youth and students free. Details: 416-789-0020.

PURIM CARNIVAL
Congregation Habonim holds a Purim carnival, 10 a.m.-noon, 5 Glen Park Ave.

100 YEARS OF JEWISH MUSIC
Beach Hebrew Institute presents "One Hundred Years of Jewish Music in Toronto," with cantors **Moshe Saadon** and **Tibor Kovari**, 3 p.m. 109 Kenilworth Ave. Suggested donation, $18.

Monday, March 9

PURIM MEGILLAH
The Song Shul presents a musical megillah with live music and more, 7:15 p.m., 5 Glen Park Ave. Tickets at songshul.com.

HARVEY ATKIN COMEDY CONTEST
Temple Sinai hosts megillah reading at 7 p.m. and a comedy show at 8 p.m., with **Jacob Balshin**, MC Humble Howard (**Howard Glassman**) and headliner **Rabbi David Kilimnick.** $18/$25. RSVP required for show: templesinai.net.

SUPERHERO PURIM CARNIVAL
Adath Israel hosts a Purim carnival, 5-6:45 p.m. Free.

DORA PURIM PARTY
Beth Tikvah hosts a Purim carnival, 5-7 p.m.

PURIM CARNIVAL
Beth Tzedec holds a Purim carnival, 4-7 p.m., with a child-centred megillah reading at 5:15 p.m. Full megillah reading at 7:15 p.m.

Tuesday, March 10

TUESDAY STUDY GROUP
Hana Werner is the guest speaker at a Women of Adath study group breakfast at 9:30 a.m. $10 for non-members. Info: **Marjorie**, 416-780-9156.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

PURIM IN JEWRASSIC PARK
Chabad Markham holds a megillah reading at 5:30 p.m., followed by acrobatic show, dinner and more. Register at chabadmarkham.org/purim.

Wed., March 11

CONNECT TO THE SEDER
Rabbi Sammy Bergman discusses "Connecting the Next Generation to the Seder," 10 a.m., Beth Emeth, Wednesdays until March 25. $30. Register at torontotorah.com/seder.

ALIYAH WORKSHOP
Nefesh B'Nefesh holds an aliyah work shop on "The Ins and Outs of Israeli Health Care" at 7 p.m., followed by "Buying/Renting a Home in Israel" at 8 p.m., Lipa Green Centre. Register at nbn.org.il/toronto.

Et Cetera

CANCER SUPPORT
Cancer support for Jewish women, including social programs, educational events and resources can be found at the L'Chaim Cancer Support Group for Jewish Women. Info: 416-630-0203, or lchaim@ncjwctoronto.org.

PURIM GIFTS
DANI is selling *mishloach manot*, including items from Israel and baked goods. Order online at dani-toronto.com. Store is open at 501 Clark Ave. W., Thornhill. Details: 905-889-3264.

REENA'S SOCIAL CLUB
A social club for individuals with autism and developmental disabilities meets Thursdays, 6:30-8:30 p.m., at Beth Sholom Synagogue. $10. RSVP to awindman@reena.org.

RESA'S PIECES
Resa's Pieces string ensemble is welcoming new members in all sections, violin, viola, cello and bass. Details: resaspieces.org.

Jewish Family & Child

Groups are open to all members of the community. A sliding scale is offered for those who need fee reductions. Registration required. Call **Shawna Sidney**, 416-638-7800 ext. 6215, or visit jfandcs.com/groups.

- Jewish Rainbow Alliance: A support group for parents, family and allies of LGBTQ individuals. Next meeting, March 11, 7-9 p.m., Lipa Green Centre. Pre-registration required.

For Seniors

- **Bernard Betel Centre**, 416-225-2112. March 10, lecture on "Extraordinary Jewish People: Female Scientists and Researchers," 10 a.m., $4.25/$8.50; March 12, wellness lecture on "You Are What You Eat: Scientific Facts," with **Yossi Strauch**, 1:30 p.m. Free.
- **Holy Blossom**, March 9, Purim party! Program includes exercise and lunch, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., $3/$5.
- **Earl Bales Seniors Club.** Contact **Valerie**, 416-395-7881.

Prosserman JCC

Donald Gales Family Pavilion on the Sherman Campus, 4588 Bathurst St., 416-638-1881 ext. 4020; prossermanjcc.com.

- Sign up for the Birthright JCC Fitness Experience, for people 21-26, at israelforfree.com.
- Beginner mah-jong starts March 11, 10 am., bridge for beginners and intermediates starts March 26, 10 a.m. Learn to play canasta, starts March 12, 1:15 p.m.
- **Elana Horwich**, author of *Meal and a Spiel: How to Be a Badass in the Kitchen*, does a cooking demonstration, March 22, 10:30 a.m. $20.

Schwartz/Reisman Centre

Joseph and Wolf Lebovic JCC, 9600 Bathurst St., 905-303-1821. Contact **Andrea** for info: andrea@srcentre.ca, or ext. 3006.

- **Barry Schwartz** discusses "Invest Well and Retire Better," March 5, 7 p.m.
- Mah-jong for beginners starts March 10, 1 p.m. Canasta lessons start March 12, 10 a.m. Bridge for beginners starts April 6, 7:30 p.m. Drop-in duplicate bridge, Thursdays at 6:45 p.m.
- LGBTQ and family Purim Shabbat dinner, March 6, 6:45-9 p.m.
- Purim Extravaganza: A Whole New World, March 8, 1-3 p.m.
- Day trips to the theatre: April 22, *Chicago* at Stratford Festival; May 7, *Gypsy* at Shaw Festival.
- Recreational programs for children, teens and young adults with autism spectrum disorder, contact karina@srcentre.ca, or ext. 3042.

Miles Nadal JCC

750 Spadina Ave., 416-924-6211, mnjcc.org.

- Register for spring programs. Member registration already open, general registration opens March 11.
- MNJCC sing-along, no conductor, no sheet music, guitar accompanist **Nathan Hiltz**, March 11, 1 p.m.
- *Purim Cabaret: From Judy to Bette*, starring **Rebecca Perry**, March 12, 1-3 p.m. $10. Seating is limited, advance registration suggested.
- Toronto Jewish Film Society presents *The Gender Lady: The Fabulous Dr. May Cohen*, March 15, 3 p.m. Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema, 506 Bloor St. W., Q-and-A with **Dr. May Cohen** and filmmakers **Barb Lent** and **Cheryl Levitt**. $12.50.
- *25 Years of Strings: A Gretchen Paxson Abberger Tribute Concert*, April 1, 7 p.m. $25.
- Daytime Passover seder, April 2, 12:30 p.m. Register by March 20.
- Five Weeks in Paris: Opera Appreciation with **Iain Scott**, Mondays March 23-April 27, 1:30-3:30 p.m.
- ASL 2: Thursdays, April 23- June 18. Ext. 356 or rachelL@mnjcc.org.
- Strength of Self, alternating Mondays, 11 a.m. A program for women who have experienced abuse. Call ext. 147.
- Shabbat Song Circle, Fridays at 10:30 a.m., for children up to age four with an adult. Ext. 390.
- **Seniors Arts and Culture**, ext. 155, lisar@mnjcc.org. "Unravelling the Scroll of Esther," with Judaica artist **Laya Crust**, March 5, 1 p.m.; Celebrate Shabbat in song with **Cantor Ben Sharpe** and **Jaclyn Klimitz**, March 27, 12:30 p.m. Enjoy a kosher lunch and welcome Shabbat. Free. Register at ext. 0.
- **Seniors Fitness**, ext. 521. Start Here, a free community wellness integration program designed to provide peer support, community engagement and learning and recovery opportunities. Agency referral required. Call ext. 574.
- LGBTQ at the JCC holds a pyjama Purim party, March 7, 8 p.m.-2 a.m., Dovercourt House; Purim celebration at Moishe House and the Beaver, for megillah reading and a Jewish drag show, March 9 at 7:30 p.m.; Games night at Snakes and Lattes, 600 Bloor St. W., March 17, 6 p.m. Details: CaraG@mnjcc.org. Tickets at eventbrite.ca
- Michael Bernstein Chapel holds services Thursdays at 7:15 a.m. and Sundays at 8 a.m. Info: **Coleman**, 416-968-0200. ■

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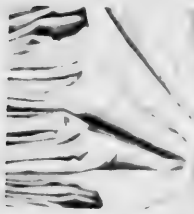

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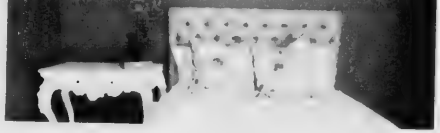

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Yuvi Tashome: Transforming Ethiopian Jewish life

ALEX ROSE
Special to The CJN

Yuvi Tashome is the co-founder of Friends by Nature, an umbrella organization established in 2005, that works in Israeli neighbourhoods where Ethiopian Jews have settled. She was in Toronto in January to raise funds for their programming.

Why did you and your friends feel like there was a need for that kind of organization?

There are 150,000 Ethiopian Israelis living in Israel, and they are in specific neighbourhoods. So, when you see what's happening in, let's say, Kiryat Moshe in Rehovot, where 80 per cent of the population is from Ethiopia, there's a lot of drugs, a lot of unemployment, you've probably heard. But then when you go deeper, you ask yourself, "What's happening?"

So our organization's conclusion is that in this neighbourhood there is a narrative that says all the good ones have a chance to get out. Statistically, maybe 10 per cent of people get out. And the ones who stay contribute to the narrative in two ways: One is, we didn't get out, and so we are a failure. And the other one is that they are the role models for the next generation. So each year, it gets deeper and worse, because the role models become worse and worse. In the first generation, it's a matter of "I'm a new immigrant." In the second generation, it's "I'm a failure." In the third generation, that's it. It's like a circle of poverty. And we want to prevent that.

So I told my friends that are lawyers and accountants, and who managed to get out of this neighbourhood, that we should go back. Then, the teenagers that grow up in this neighbourhood will see a drug dealer, but also a lawyer. And they will have the opportunity to choose. So there were 30 people in my house, and I told them my vision, and they said, "No. We managed to get out of this neighbourhood. You want us to go back?" And I said, "Why not?" And they said, "First of all, the education is bad. There are no lights in the streets. There's garbage all over." So we made a list of what wasn't working, and I said, "Wow. That looks like what we need to change."

So we are already 15 years in, and the next generation of youth is staying. They find it's a very good place for them, for the kids. And the ones who left, after ten years of us working in the neighbourhood, came back to rent houses around their families.

How did you decide to start it?

My husband, who is an engineer, he was traveling a lot. One day, the whole neighbourhood came to ask if I'm okay. And I said, "Yeah I'm okay. What's wrong?" And they said, "Haven't you heard? Somebody from the north murdered his wife." And I said, "Someone that we know?" And they said, "An Ethiopian guy. So we are just checking if you are okay." They lived really far away. The only connection is that we both came from Ethiopia. And my neighbours, they are not bad people, they are just worried. But this connection eventually made me understand that every Ethiopian in this country is going to influence my life, so I should do something to influence their life.

What kinds of programs do you do?

In Ethiopia, kids didn't go to school. They learned by watching their parents. When we came to a Western country, well, everybody needs to go to school. So in my generation we were taken to a boarding school. So my parents never learned that this is their responsibility. They are not dumb, they are not stupid. They just didn't understand it is their responsibility to create an environment of learning. So we created a program called Homework at Home. And the idea is to do that at home. Not at a club, not at a boarding school, at home. The mother just watches what's happening, and after three months, she already creates silence, environment and light, whatever it takes.

Yuvi Tashome

In Ethiopia, you learn everything from your parents, meaning your parents are like God. You appreciate them. You admire them. When you admire them, you admire yourself. But here, you don't have the opportunity to see your parents leading.

So we created a community garden, around 80 participants working there, and they are the best at growing food. We want the kids to see that. So they bring in the food, and we bring Israeli groups to learn the process of growing organic food, and the kids see that native Israelis want to learn from their parents. They think, "My parents have something very important. If they have something important, it means I'm important."

What results have you seen?

We hired a new person for Homework at Home, and after two weeks, she said, "I don't know what you're talking about. Every house in this neighbourhood, they know how to do homework. The parents are taking responsibility. I don't think we need Homework at Home anymore."

Another thing is, 15 years ago other Israeli people came to the neighbourhood in order to give something to these "new" immigrants, even though they weren't even new immigrants anymore. It could be clothes, food, computers that you don't use, refrigerators that you don't use. But the method was giving. And what's happening now? A lot of people are coming to the neighbourhood, but to buy something. So they're taking cooking classes, how to cook healthy Ethiopian food.

They have Ethiopian hospitality experiences. They're coming to buy organic vegetables. So the direction is changing. And the most important thing is, the kids are feeling like they still want to live in this neighbourhood because it's a good neighbourhood. In locations where we don't operate, rental prices have doubled in the past 15 years. In the locations where we do, they have grown four times. So something definitely happened there. ■

This interview has been edited and condensed for style and clarity.

Sonny Goldstein, CFP
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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
MARCH 5, 2020

The consolation of Queen Esther

EROL ARAF

The blindfolded young queen fell down on her knees and with outstretched arms, vainly searched for the block upon which she would place her head. In darkness she cried, "What shall I do? Where is it?"

The ladies-in-waiting, the executioner, the Tower officials, the gilded gentry and the priest froze in consternation as they watched the heart-wrenching scene unfolding before their eyes. Finally, a gentle soul guided her hands to the block. Commending her soul into the Lord's hands, she drew her last breath. The sharp axe fell swiftly on the neck of the young lady who had "wandered lonely as a cloud that floats on high o'er vales and hills" on the gentle lands of England.

But the shame and chagrin of the crime of judicially killing an innocent child descended on the party with the ferocity of a winter squall. They left the scene ignominiously as the queen's head lay on the scaffold in a welter of reproachful blood under a cast-iron sky.

Bloody Mary had drawn the first blood of her crimson reign.

> *The day of her execution, she watched from her cell the beheading of her husband.*

The victim, Lady Jane Grey, was the eldest daughter of Henry Grey, Duke of Suffolk, and the great-granddaughter of Henry VII. Jane had the crown placed on her unwilling head after the death of her cousin, the Protestant King Edward VI, son of Henry VIII. (She was actually fifth in line to the throne, but this was his personal choice as she was a Protestant.) Lady Jane's parents and ambitious relatives used anti-Catholic sentiments to place the crown on her uneasy head only for nine days before Edward's half-sister, Mary, triumphed in this bloody game of thrones.

Jane was extraordinary by all standards: fluent in Greek, Latin and Hebrew, she also spoke perfect French and Italian. Learned beyond her years, she could quote verses from both Testaments and discuss Plato and Aristotle with scholars. Oblivious to the trap set by fate and history, she led a contemplative life redolent with intellectual desires and pleasures embedded in her boundless curiosity, affection and humanity.

Lady Jane was the quintessential Renaissance philo-Semitic Hebraist. To understand the importance of Hebrew in the opening of the European mind, considered by Johann Reuchlin as the language "God spoke with his Angels," we have to remember that Erasmus, Luther, Calvin, many popes, cardinals and philosophers also spoke and wrote in the Israelite language. Luther, in a rare moment of lucidity, went so far as to say that "Christ was Jewish" and that his language was supreme.

Lady Jane's Protestantism was solidly based on the Old Testament: Israelite Apocrypha relating to injunctions about "gods of gold, silver, wood, and stone" was invoked by the young princess against the Catholic practise of venerating sacred objects, and she considered the ceremony of the consecrated wafer "abominable."

The "word" as written in the Hebrew Bible was the foundation of her faith, and she considered the new faith to be the continuation of the old one. She was no anti-Jewish "supersessionist" in an England that had banished the Jews.

The day of her execution, she watched from her cell the beheading of her husband. Waiting for her turn, she opened her Bible to the story of the song of Daniel's friends set ablaze in a furnace and to the tale of the old man Eleazar being flogged to death, in the Book of Maccabees, for refusing to break with Jewish dietary laws as examples of divine suffering. She also drew comfort from another queen who had faced death in her decision to speak to the king to save her people from destruction. Lady Jane read Queen Esther's prayer and walked solemnly to the scaffold to meet her maker. ■

Erol Araf lives in Montreal.

Married with Kids

Fears of the road

Lauren Kramer

It's been three years since my son drove solo for the first time, and I well remember my fear the first few times he ventured out. When I sent him to buy bananas at the corner store I fluttered anxiously around the house like a trapped bird. It felt like he was gone an excruciatingly long time – longer than a quick banana purchase required – and all kinds of horrific accident scenarios flew through my head. I reached for the phone to call him, but couldn't do it. What if my call distracted him? I couldn't take the chance.

I thought it would be easier releasing kids number two and three onto the road, but here we are again with the same fears percolating. My twin teens have six months of training behind them, have passed the driving test and have all of their official documents in hand. The only thing standing between them and the open road is me.

Before we began the process, I made them swear up and down that no matter when they received their license, they would not drive independently until I agreed they were 100 per cent ready. And although I've seen a mix of responsible driving, and some scary new-driver errors, I'm still not ready to release them from that promise.

It's that old conundrum that frightens me to bits: driving expertise only comes with experience. But the process of obtaining that experience is fraught with danger and the potential for accidents with horrific consequences. The "what if's?" can be paralyzing, and there are just so many of them.

As they champ at the bit for independence, I try to explain my hesitation. "You are the most precious people in my life," I say. "I cannot take any chances when it comes to your safety. So I need assurance you can react quickly under pressure behind the wheel and make responsible decisions.

"Any monkey can press the brake and accelerator, but those unexpected scenarios you'll encounter as new drivers and how you respond to them can be the difference between life and death."

> *I'm beginning to understand that parenting and fear go hand in hand.*

My kids are rolling their eyeballs. They've heard this speech before and are full of exaggerated confidence in their own abilities. "Relax, mom, I've got this," the first twin told me, minutes before running a red light at a busy intersection last Saturday. I'd barely recovered from shock before I began a sharp attack of her poor decision-making. "She's just not ready," I told myself. "We need more time."

As drivers, we've all experienced near-collisions behind the wheel. We've seen other drivers make careless decisions, drive too fast or react too slowly. Heck, we've done these things ourselves. The lucky among us have managed to avoid collisions, have left the scene of an almost-accident with accelerated heart rates and sweaty palms thinking, "There but for the grace of God go I." We don't have to look far to find stories of others that were less fortunate in similar scenarios. Young drivers paralyzed for life; teens out for a quick drive that ended with life-changing consequences. Impromptu memorials are scattered all over the roads and highways, tributes of love to people who never made it home, be it through their own error or mistakes made by others. Lives changed irrevocably in an instant, with no possibility of a second chance.

So I'm biding my time and quieting my doubts by insisting my twins practice their driving more. Though independence day looms for my girls, as a Jewish mother I'll never be ready for it. I'm beginning to understand that parenting and fear go hand in hand. When you love your kids this fiercely, you never stop worrying for their safety. ■

OBITUARIES AND RELATED NOTICES

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Wainberg, Linda	Feb 9, 2020	275 Doak Lane
Rothschild Johanna "Hanni" Eleonore Rothschild	Feb. 10, 2020	162 North Meadow Cres
Katz, Freda	Feb. 11, 2020	11 Hyde Park Crt
Shtepa, Nikoai	Feb. 11, 2020	Private
Greenwald, Robert	Feb. 11, 2020	364 York Hill Blvd
Gries, Marvin	Feb. 13, 2020	3303 Don Mills Rd
Joffe, Max	Feb. 13, 2020	96 Charnwood Place
Ryczke, Anela	Feb. 15, 2020	Private
Malkinson, Ita Pessa	Feb. 16, 2020	273 Spring Gate Blvd
Tepperman, Irene	Feb. 16, 2020	262 Upper Highland Cres
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Kathy Ridout	Feb 22/20	1171 Davis Lane
Steven Drexler	Feb 21/20	99 Bedford Park Avenue
Miriam Feldman	Feb 24/20	569 Sheppard Ave. West
Harold Baker	Feb 25/20	660 Sheppard Ave. East
Isaac Mike Wierzba	Feb 25/20	3517 Loyalist Drive

HEBREW BASIC BURIAL

Marilyne (Herson) Berman	Feb 10/20	15 North Park Drive
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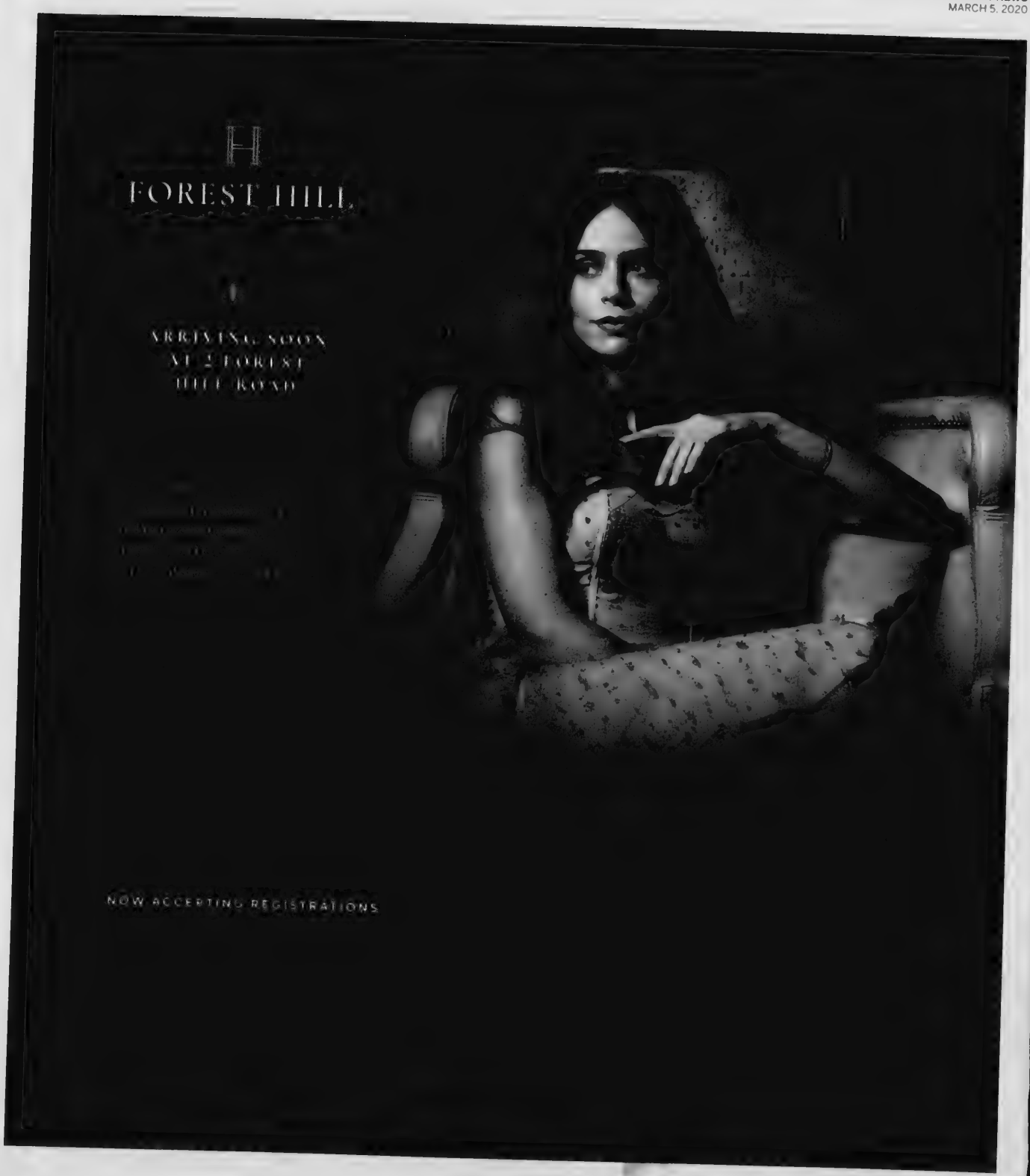
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Life in the age of coronavirus

Canadian, Israeli communities respond to COVID-19 health concerns. PAGES 12, 22-23

The Jewish state's political limbo

After the third election in a year, it's still unclear who will lead Israel. PAGES 6, 24-25

Taking on the campus haters

York, McMaster cancel talks amid controversy. PAGES 15, 16
PLUS: JDL head banned. PAGE 14

From Victoria to Anatevka

A B.C. high school looks to the Jewish community for some stage advice. PAGE 26

UNCHAINED MELODY

How Canadian Jewry can stand up for agunot. PAGE 8

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Quotable

> Another example of the profound [illegible] and [illegible] that is.

— Ronan Farrow, after learning that his publisher would be releasing a memoir by his father, Woody Allen. It was later pulled.

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Trending

A wedding for a llama

Mendl Weinstock, a 21-year-old student at the University of Akron, got a turn in the viral media limelight by telling Reddit about a vow he made his sister, Riva: to bring a llama to her wedding. The story started with a family road trip from their native Ohio to Indiana, when Mendl told Riva that he'd have other places to be when she got married, due to her incessant talk about it, but would show up if he brought a llama. Five years later, after she got engaged, he rented "Shocky" at a farm for US$400, and brought him to the March 1 wedding, without a warning. The llama even wore a tuxedo, and a kippah.

An American analogy for Nasrin

"Israel's Rihanna is Arab and Jewish," a *New York Times* story by Toronto native Matti Friedman, brought wider notice to Nasrin Kadri after she filled 9,000 seats in Tel Aviv's Menora Mivtachim Arena in January. In less than a decade, Nasrin, 33, went from winning a TV talent show to a judge on Israel's version of *The Voice*. Along the way, her engagement to singer Aviezer Ben Moha sparked a conversion process, which she still followed through on after they broke up. How somebody raised on the Muslim streets of Haifa, gravitated to Judaism only after gaining success by singing Mizrachi pop in Hebrew, couldn't happen in any other land

Look out! There are llamas.

Screwball comics

Rube Goldberg's original art was curated for a retrospective exhibition that's toured the U.S. for the past three years. During its residency in Queens, N.Y., legendary *Maus* cartoonist Art Spiegelman dropped by to consider Goldberg's drawings of outlandish contraptions, primarily from the 1920s and '30s. His piece in the *New York Review of Books* gives Goldberg new due, in tandem with a newly published history of manic illustrators, *Screwball!* Comics like *Krazy Kat* and *Popeye* initially confined Yiddish-inspired chaos to print, yet Goldberg further imagined manifesting it as machinery—and the Queens Museum even tried to follow instructions on building one. (Spiegelman notes how it then fell out of working order.) ■

Compiled by Marc Weisblott of CJN Today, our email newsletter. CJNews.com/today.

Gematria

37

The age at which pothead Seth Rogen decided to show off more of his pottery, having recently stepped up using his Instagram account to show off ceramics that he made.

53

The age at which (Bill) Goldberg won the WWE Universal Championship for the second time, on Feb. 27 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, nearly 23 years into his pro wrestling career.

93

The age at which *Inside the Actors Studio* host James Lipton died on March 2. He launched that show in 1994, after a lifelong arts career, and once running a bordello in Paris.

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Letters to the Editor

A proud three-day-a-year-Jew

With all due respect to Rabbi Asher Vale, I take great exception to his description of a three-day-a-year Jew ("Why not become a four-time-a-year Jew?" Feb. 27).

What exactly is he getting at? Am I, and others like me, only a Jew three days a year because we only attend synagogue on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur? Are we not Jews the other 362 days of the year? Are there not other ways to exercise one's Judaism?

I also do not understand his questioning of Jews that attend synagogue on the High Holidays. True, these services may not be the most exciting of all holiday services, but for many, these holidays are their personal connection to Judaism, rich in custom and family tradition. As referenced in a previous column of Rabbi Vale's, it is much the same as the woman converting to Judaism and making a connection through Jewish cooking. Everyone has their way of relating to the religion that is comfortable for them.

Please don't knock it, embrace it, after all, in these days of growing anti-Semitism, we Jews, whatever our level of observance, need to stick together more than ever.

Jeff Fishbain
Toronto

Is Bernie good for the Jews?

Ron Kampeas misses the point with his analysis of a possible Jewish president ("Could we have a Jewish president in the White House?" Feb. 20).

Bernie Sanders might be Jewish in name, but he has no Jewish *neshamah*, no Jewish soul. He has repeatedly admonished Israel for its defensive position, his biggest applause at rallies are for his anti-Jewish rhetoric and his biggest supporters are known anti-Semites.

The real takeaway from this election is that the only way a Jewish candidate can thrive in America is to openly demonstrate anti-Jewish sentiments.

Elan Beer
Toronto

Yiddish in Scandinavia

The article, "Beautiful Stockholm through Jewish eyes" (Feb. 27) is full of interesting facts about Sweden. The article fails to mention that Yiddish is one of five minority languages formally recognized in Sweden.

Official recognition was given to these five languages in 1999. To be classified as a minority language, it must be spoken as a language and not a dialect, and have been spoken in Sweden for three generations or approximately 100 years.

The Jewish population of Sweden is thought to be 20,000 out of a total population of 10.5 million and only about 2,000 to 6,000 of Swedish Jews speak some Yiddish.

Lydia Vale
Toronto

Clarification

The article "B'nai Brith to sue the federal government," (March 5) stated that B'nai Brith Canada is taking the federal government to court to force it to designate Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist entity. In fact, B'nai Brith is seeking an order requiring the government to respond to a letter from the Jewish group, which asked Ottawa to add the IRGC to its list of terrorist groups.

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Rabbi2Rabbi

Reviewing the role of the rebbetzin

For generations, a rabbi's wife has been expected to take on certain tasks simply by virtue of being married to a community's spiritual leader. Now, with vastly different societal norms, what should happen to the position?

RABBI AVI FINEGOLD
FOUNDER, THE JEWISH LEARNING LAB, MONTREAL

RABBI PHILIP SCHEIM
BETH DAVID B'NAI ISRAEL BETH AM CONGREGATION, TORONTO

Drawing of Deborah by Gustave Dore.
SHUTTERSTOCK PHOTO

Rabbi Finegold: In a recent conversation with a rabbinic colleague, the topic of the role of the rebbetzin in contemporary society arose. Historically, the rabbi's wife had a host of duties – mainly related to her being married to the rabbi – such as being involved in the sisterhood, being asked questions that a woman would prefer to ask another woman, and being the *balabusta*-in-chief for her household and community.

My stance has generally been that, in a contemporary society, with women acting as clergy, we should tend to see a reduction in these roles and an emphasis on professionalizing the role of a female public figure. True, many spouses of rabbis have no interest in taking on these roles, and have no special skills to be a rebbetzin, but conversely, there are many trained professionals who can take on pastoral and communal roles.

The colleague I was speaking with was quick to point out the soft power held and maintained by the rabbi's spouse, either male or female, and that we should not be so quick to dismiss the rebbetzin as a role in our community.

As both a rabbi and the spouse of a rabbi, it really got me thinking about whether we should be completely eliminating the idea of the rebbetzin, or whether we should rethink and evolve it to fit a modern approach to rabbinics.

Rabbi Scheim: I doubt that a return to the classical rebbetzin model – especially outside of the Orthodox world – is likely to happen any time soon, or ever. I remember with affection rebbetzin role models from my childhood and my early rabbinic years, who fulfilled the functions you describe.

In a very religiously observant community, the rabbi's wife would be someone who could coach women on *taharat ha-mishpachah* (family purity) and similar female-centric issues. But in an age when gender roles and even the rabbinic family structure have dramatically shifted, I don't see a return to past understandings.

Even the term "rebbetzin" would be viewed by many of today's rabbinic spouses as demeaning to the spouse's individuality.

Rabbi Finegold: While I agree in large part to what you are articulating, I am curious as to the issue behind the issue – which is what happens when traditional structures are replaced. As a rabbi and the spouse of a clergy member as well (oh, and by the way, there is only one correct answer to what you call the husband of a female clergy member: lucky), I recognize that the diplomatic role that the classical rebbetzin played needs to be replaced by something else. However, I don't think we have figured out how to replace it yet.

What our congregations have figured out is that the work classically done by rebbetzins has either been picked up by able volunteers or professionalized. Now, if only we could change the way people view rabbis' children....

Rabbi Scheim: In a classical rebbetzin structure, a rabbi's spouse could be subject to criticism or gossip should her style, manner of dress or character not measure up to community expectations. Since it was her spouse, not she, who had been hired by the synagogue, and since no salary was forthcoming for her involvement, it is not regrettable that the role has shifted, if not largely been abandoned.

The larger question undoubtedly is the inevitable shifting of the role of the rabbi, as synagogues struggle to maintain relevance in a world changing too rapidly. ■

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Daniels BAIF

Health before politics in fragmented Israel

Uriel Heilman spoke for a lot of people in Israel last week – somewhere in the range of 100,000 people, to be accurate. The director of business development at 70 Faces Media, parent company of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (one of *The CJN*'s long-standing partners), along with his wife and four children, were sent into quarantine in Israel after returning from a trip to northern Italy, where the spread of the coronavirus has been particularly rampant. Like so many in the Jewish state – and amid heightening travel restrictions, that number is expected to grow, unless or until Israel closes its borders entirely – they were stuck trying to make the best of a tough situation.

Midway through the 14-day quarantine, Heilman wrote, "Our living room was littered with board games, Legos and the remains of half-finished art projects. We were starting to run low on some essentials, and I realized with dismay one day at lunchtime that I somehow had forgotten to change out of my pyjamas."

The family was trying to stay positive, with a lot of help from friends and family, and a bit of humour along the way. But the effects of quarantine are very real: "As we count down the days, trying to keep our nervousness at bay every time someone coughs or has a headache," Heilman admitted, "we're reading the news about the virus' spread with growing alarm. Already, friends and family on distant continents have been subject to quarantine, too."

Here in Canada, we can be thankful that it hasn't come to that, at least not yet. But the coronavirus has nonetheless altered Jewish life. At synagogue this past Saturday, there were fewer handshakes, more elbow bumps. On the walk there, I stopped to chat with a friend; we tapped shoes as we headed our separate ways. March of the Living and Birthright Israel trips have been postponed – and, who knows, Passover might be next. You've probably found yourself imagining what you'd do if you were in Heilman's spot, perhaps even preparing for it.

What went unmentioned by Heilman are the after-effects of Israel's March 2 election. That is understandable, even

> "The world of Israeli politics remains in a lockdown of its own, post-election, after voting left the country divided once again."

commendable, because health comes first. The omission also speaks to the importance of not playing politics with a possible pandemic, a message that Israeli President Reuven Rivlin underscored over the weekend. "I know about politics," he said, "and this is far, far from politics."

Nonetheless, the world of Israeli politics remains in a lockdown of its own, post-election, after voting left the country divided once again. With most of the major players vowing before Israel's third election in less than a year that there would not be a fourth consecutive ballot, coalition manoeuvrings have quickly intensified. Two potential scenarios could see either a unity government composed of Likud and Blue and White – the two parties that won the most seats – or a Blue and White coalition with Avigdor Liberman's secularist Yisrael Beytenu party and the Labor-Gesher-Meretz left wing trifecta, with help from the Joint List of mostly Arab parties.

Rivlin is expected to announce on March 17 whether Blue and White Leader Benny Gantz will get the first crack at forming government, or if Benjamin Netanyahu, the still-prime minister whose Likud party won the most seats on March 2, receives the honour. The same day, Netanyahu's criminal trial on breach of trust, bribery and fraud charges is set to begin. And in the interim, Bibi's opponents may move forward with legislation that would bar any member of the Knesset under indictment – a.k.a Netanyahu – from forming government. In other words, hold on tight. It's going to be a bumpy ride. ■ — YONI

From the Archives

Basketball champs

ONTARIO JEWISH ARCHIVES, BLANKENSTEIN FAMILY HERITAGE CENTRE, UJA FEDERATION OF GREATER TORONTO

The OJA recently acquired this photograph of the victorious YMHA Midget Basketball City Championship team of 1942. The Y team defeated the Lizzies 45–33. Scoring stars were Nisker, with eight points, and Himel, with seven. Pictured, back row, from left: J. Lanetsky, L. Shack, A. Shack, J. Collis, N. Collis, P. Elias, H. Simon, A. Britt. Front row, from left, S. Himel, M. Nisker, Snooky L. Rubenstein, L. Glait, B. Wiseman, S. Tweyman, J. Tennenbaum, S. Fruitman. From the Wiseman and Shack Family collection

SeeJN

Five generations of Eisenstadts

COURTESY DAVID EISENSTADT

Harry Eisenstadt, at 17, fled the Ukrainian pogroms landing in New York to join family in Cleveland in the early 1900s. He and four friends, also from Ukraine, soon hopped a train and disembarked in Calgary around 1910. The lure of free land in the West, and meeting and marrying Toba (nee Frankel) began this family dynasty.

Pictured from top, left: Harry, son Max and grandson David. Bottom, from left, great-grandsons Harris and Evan, and great-great-grandson Owen.

Essay

The kindness of strangers

Nancy McDonald

Not long ago I received an extraordinary email out of the blue. It was from a man in Berlin named Miklas who explained that he is involved in the Stolpersteine Project.

I had never heard of it, but it didn't take me long to discover that it's the inspiration of German painter Gunter Demnig, who was looking for a way to commemorate the lives of people exterminated by the Nazis. Each *stolpersteine*, roughly translated as "stumbling block," is a small piece of concrete to which a plain brass plaque, stamped by hand, is affixed. The stone is embedded in the sidewalk so that it lies flush with the pavement, literally underfoot, in front of the last place a person lived voluntarily before being imprisoned, deported or murdered.

Demnig laid the first *stolpersteines* in Cologne in the early 1990s. The next year he installed some in Berlin. Young people embraced the idea. Residents began to form groups to research who had been persecuted in their district. Before long, the project had spread. Today, it's the largest decentralized monument to the Holocaust, with more than 70,000 *stolpersteines* in 24 countries.

Miklas reached out to me because he was researching the lives of the Jews who had lived in his Berlin district of Mariendorf. They included my late husband's family, the Avigdors. Miklas had uncovered a great deal of information on them, but he hadn't been able to determine what ultimately happened to them. He'd found me, he said, when he did a Google search for my late father-in-law, Rifat Avigdor. Up came *Boy from Berlin*, the novel I had written about the family's escape from Nazi Europe. It led Miklas to my website and email address – and the happy news that the Avigdors would not qualify for a *stolpersteine*.

The stolpersteine remembering Charlotte Friedemann

I was thrilled and intrigued that a stranger thousands of miles away was doing exactly what I was, looking into my late husband's family, trying to piece together their lives and what had happened to them all. It's been a challenge, what with the language barrier – I don't speak German – and as everyone directly involved, including my husband, is now dead.

I had gleaned some information from letters written by my late father-in-law to the British Air Ministry and Home Office. I knew that in the early 1930s my husband, Heinz (nicknamed Käfer), and his family were living what appeared to be a privileged life in Berlin. Heinz's father Rifat, originally from Constantinople, was a successful aeronautical engineer and the director of one of Germany's largest airplane parts companies. His self-priming fuel pump was on the list of the German Air Force's secret weapons.

But, Rifat and his wife Else had a secret, one they hid from their children in an effort to keep them safe. They were Jews. In the spring of 1938, the family fled Berlin with little more than a prototype of the fuel pump and began a perilous flight from the Gestapo, heading first to the Netherlands, where Rifat set up his own airplane parts manufacturing firm and provided information to the British about German aircraft and parts development and production. On May 14, 1940, the family escaped by fishing boat to Folkestone, England as bombs pounded Rotterdam. Eight months later, they were all safely in Canada, admitted in part because of Rifat's aeronautical talent, but also because he declared himself a Turk of Turkish descent, not a Jew.

I also knew that Heinz's aunts and uncle on Rifat's side had all survived the war, although his two aunts had lived in horrific circumstances for years, hiding out in caves and nearly starving to death in Italy as they were bombarded almost daily. I'd been told by relatives that his aunt, Charlotte Friedemann, his mother's sister, had died in a concentration camp. As for his uncle Ernst, I could find nothing on him at all. It was as if he'd vanished into thin air.

Miklas had information that helped fill in the blanks. Heinz's uncle had somehow managed to live out the war. In 1948, he immigrated to Sao Paulo, Brazil. Aunt Charlotte had been sent to the Warsaw Ghetto in April 1942 where she died. Miklas sent me a copy of the transport list with her name on it, which gave me chills.

While it was a relief to discover what had actually happened to Charlotte, I felt ineffably sad. Single with no children, she had been the only one of the immediate family to die in the Shoah. How terrified and lonely she must have been, and how desperate her sister in Toronto must have felt, first wondering if Charlotte was alive, and finally, having to accept that she wasn't.

I emailed Miklas and asked if it would be possible to arrange for a *stolpersteine* for her, although I knew from the website that it could take months – even years because of the demand.

It was well past midnight in Berlin, but Miklas replied right away. "There is already a *stolpersteine* for her. It was laid Oct. 29, 2013 in front of Emser Str. 15 in Wilmersdorf, Berlin. That was where she lived until November 1941 when she was moved and put into forced labour before being transported to the Warsaw Ghetto."

He also told me that the young woman who had done the research had collected donations for Charlotte's *stolpersteine* and that primary school students sang at the commemoration.

We'll never know what her life would have been had she not been murdered. But, thanks to the efforts of total strangers, the world knows that Charlotte Friedemann lived – and that her life counted. ■

Nancy McDonald is a journalist. Her sequel to Boy from Berlin, One Boy's War, *will be published in May 2020. She lives in Stratford, Ont.*

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FOREMOST FINANCIAL

The communal blight of get-refusal

Just because you can't see the abuse doesn't mean it isn't there

YAEL MACHTINGER
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

At the heart of one of our most joyous holidays lies a dark, open secret that hides the suffering of invisible women in our community. On March 9, two special events occurred: Ta'anit Esther (the Fast of Esther), leading the way into Purim celebrations, and also International Agunah Day, drawing attention to hidden and silenced women.

These days are appropriately linked. According to the Talmud, biblical heroine Esther was forced into an unwanted marriage to King Ahasuerus. Esther, whose name is related to the Hebrew word *hester*, meaning "hidden," was silenced. Like Esther, *agunot* (women anchored to unwanted marriages) today don't control their own destinies. They are subject to the whims of a controlling spouse in challenging marriages, and they fear for their lives. Like Esther, the voices of *agunot* have been hidden and silenced. So we use Ta'anit Esther to publicize the plight of *agunot*, women refused a *get* (Jewish divorce decree) by their recalcitrant husbands. Ultimately, however, Queen Esther saved the Jewish people. The question remains: who will save Jewish women from the abuse of *get*-refusal?

The lack of support focusing solely on the issues of Jewish women who experience domestic abuse, of which *get*-refusal is a unique and sinister type, is a blight on our community. Make no mistake about it: the lack of an organization dedicated solely to this cause does not mean the need isn't there. There are *agunot* in Canada today, and they need our help.

My research has affirmed that while there is more shame and fewer resources in religious communities (of all faiths), the rate of violence is the same as in non-religious communities (of all faiths). Moreover, research shows that every case of *get*-refusal is preceded by other forms of domestic abuse, with the refusal of a *get* acting as the final blow.

For some men, it is the final vestige of control. At times, husbands attempt to leverage the *get* in exchange for civil concessions far beyond those they might be entitled to, turning the religious legal requirement into a civil bargaining chip. Some women even expressed that *get*-refusal is harder to endure than physical violence because "once you remove yourself from the environment of physical abuse, it stops; but the abuse of *get*-refusal follows you everywhere."

Esther before Ahasuerus, by Giovanni Andrea Sirani in the 1630s. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Our community in Canada is not immune. Just because you may not see it doesn't mean it isn't here. Even after my years of doctoral and communal work, I am sad and disappointed, but not surprised, to report that not much has changed. There remains much complacency, indifference, denial and silence, and so I write again on this annual day of commemoration.

Don't get me wrong, it's not all status quo. There have been noteworthy legal changes over the years to our civil laws. There have been many talmudic and halakhic remedies suggested over centuries, but to date, neither the religious nor civil legal routes have been effective (especially in Ontario).

There are numerous reasons for this, none of which change the bottom line: *get*-refusal, extortion and abuse exist (even if you can't see it). The "cure du jour," the halakhic prenuptial agreement, in the words of Rabbi Mordechai Willig, its primary rabbinic author, proponent and prolific rabbinic authority, "is not effective in all cases" in the United States. Meanwhile, it is not effective in any cases in Canada.

Rabbi Daniel Korobkin, senior rabbi of Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto (BAYT), one of the largest Orthodox synagogues in North America, is the current president of the Rabbinical Council of America, which passed a resolution in 2016 "requiring the use of prenuptial agreements" for its member rabbis when officiating marriages. A handful of other Canadian rabbis have also signed on – a nice, but largely symbolic gesture considering the number of rabbis in those communities and the fact that no members of the Toronto beit din will sign on (as they have made explicitly clear in these pages).

Yet, both legally (due to the ban on religious arbitration) and religiously (because the Toronto beit din has repeatedly come out against the prenup, despite the halakhic approval of Rabbi Willig and other world-renowned rabbis), couples signing these prenups will not be able to use them in Canada and will not be protected if they are refused a *get* – which, statistics show, some of them will be. By signing prenups, couples are simply making a social statement, not a binding contract in either legal system at present. They should continue to make this important social statement, but with the understanding that they have no legal protections as a result.

So what can we do, and how can we go about making a real change?

Firstly, we must understand where the battle needs to be fought. The "problem" is not Jewish laws surrounding divorce – as asymmetrical as they may be. After all, the vast majority of Jewish divorces do not result in the abuse of *get*-refusal. In fact, when a *get* is proffered, the divorce is more efficient and economical than compared to our civil system. Moreover, research shows that the women refused a *get* do not see religion or Jewish law as the problem.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 21

Reuben Cipin
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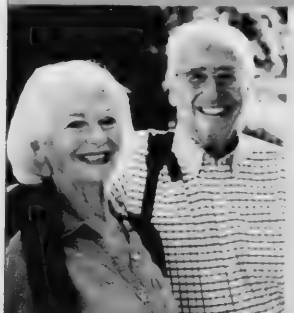

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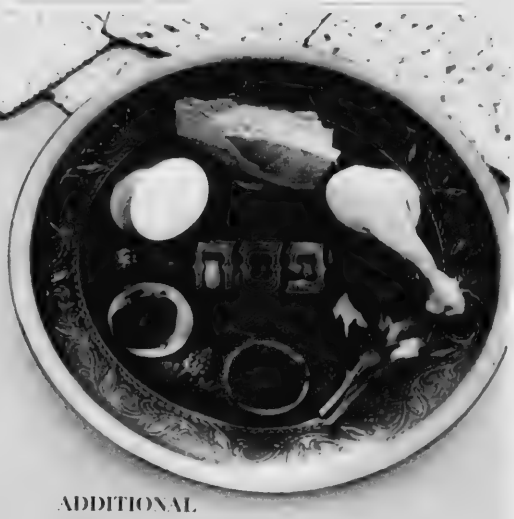

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Chopped Liver Paté with Fried Onion and Matzah Crackers
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Creamy Hawaiian Slaw with Fine Shredded Red and Green Cabbage, Carrots, Pineapple, Mango and Apple Cider Dressing
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Mixed Green Salad with Orange, Grapefruit, Mandarin Segments, Sweet Pickled Heirloom Carrots, Honey Berry Dressing
$6 per portion

Baby Spinach Salad with Roasted Red and Golden Beets, Balsamic Vinaigrette
$6 per portion

MAINS

Matzah Breaded Chicken Roulade Stuffed with Spinach, Pimento, Caramelized Onion Marmalade Served with Au Jus
$24 per portion

Pan Seared Chicken Supreme Served with Mango Peach Salsa and Au Jus
$22 per portion

Citrus Glazed Salmon Served with Citrus Pomegranate Salsa
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$45 per pound cooked weight

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SIDES/STARCHES

(average 4oz per portion)

Herb Garlic Crisp Potato
$4 per portion

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$35 per pan (Serves 9)

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$38 per pan (Serves 9)

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$30 per dozen

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Seder Plate
$20 per plate

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Pan Seared Chicken Supreme Served with Mango Peach Salsa with Au Jus
Herb Garlic Crisp Potato
Sautéed Mixed Vegetables

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בית צדק

Rigid traditionalists turning Jews away from God

Rabbi Dow Marmur

Rabbi David Hartman died in Jerusalem in February 2013. He had left the pulpit of an Orthodox synagogue in Montreal in 1971 to settle in Israel, where he continued his scholarly work and the publication of many important books on Jewish thought.

Five years after his aliyah, with the support of Canadian and other benefactors, he established the Shalom Hartman Institute in memory of his father. His son Rabbi Donniel Hartman is now its president. With time, the institute established a branch in New York that has become a centre of Jewish learning, as well as a driving force in Jewish interdenominational understanding and co-operation.

To mark Rabbi David Hartman's seventh yahrzeit, the institute in Jerusalem organized a symposium about current efforts to create an indigenous Israeli Judaism. The symposium concentrated on the shape and place of halakhah (Jewish law) in the context of religious renewal in the sovereign Jewish state.

In his opening statement, Rabbi Donniel Hartman referred to the traditional rabbinic understanding of halakhah as a sea offering almost countless possibilities of making one's way as a Jew in order to reach one's own religious destination. He suggested the term "halakhah" should never take the definite article, but should often be spoken about in the plural. Rabbi Hartman deplored current attempts to turn Jewish law into a small pool that restricts those in it to a uniformity, unknown in authentic Judaism, that seeks to impose an unwarranted and unnecessary legalistic discipline.

Though the major codifiers of halakhah – notably Moses Maimonides (born around 1135) in his *Mishneh Torah* and Joseph Karo (born in 1488) in his *Shulchan Arukh* – in their efforts to establish order and consistency by providing a structure to Jewish life, are often held responsible, it's those who nowadays seek to impose uniformity in the name of the ancient sages who are the real culprits. In their ostensible effort to bring Jews closer to God, they're turning Jews away from God by restricting religious life in the guise of piety and fidelity to tradition.

Nowhere is this more in evidence nowadays than in Israel, where political clout has given exponents of rigid Orthodoxy unprecedented power, much of it exercised through the Ashkenazic and Sephardic chief rabbis and their officials. Instead of providing a structure to Jewish life, they often impose stifling strictures on individuals and groups.

Thus, for example, some 400,000 Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union aren't recognized as Jews. And to this very day, there are Jews in Ethiopia who are not allowed to come to Israel because their Jewish status isn't acceptable to the Chief Rabbinate of Israel.

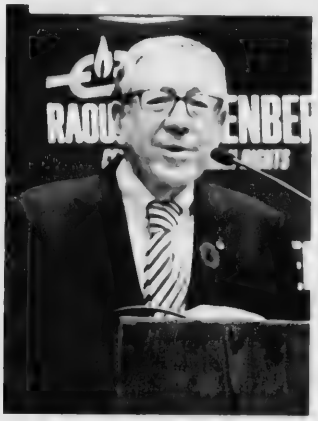
Not only have secular and liberal religious Jews been penalized and scandalized by it, but a growing number of Orthodox Jews have distanced themselves from the imposed strictures by making other arrangements. Today, there are Orthodox rabbis in Israel who officiate at weddings not registered with the official authorities. There is also an alternative kashrut organization that seeks to bypass undue and, at times, arbitrary bureaucracy by officials.

All this points to a different kind of Judaism that's developing in the Jewish state. Though it'll take decades before it matures, we can already discern trends. Israeli Judaism will transcend the existing divisions of Reform, Conservative and Orthodox, which are largely the creations of the Ashkenazic Diaspora and don't adequately reflect the religious aspiration of Jews living in the sovereign Jewish state.

The Israeli Judaism of tomorrow is also likely to incorporate elements of the practices and attitudes of Jews whose families came to Israel from Muslim lands and who often are more relaxed than their Ashkenazic siblings in their attitudes toward halakhah.

As a result, the old divisions between religious and secular are likely to dwindle, even disappear. Recent surveys indicate that Israelis who describe themselves as secular nevertheless observe traditional religious practices, especially around Jewish festivals and lifecycle events. Living as a Jew in Israel makes it impossible to ignore Jewish traditions, but does so without wrapping them in legalistic rigidity. ■

The diverging careers of Irwin Cotler and Alan Dershowitz



Irwin Cotler

Alan Dershowitz VITO AMATI PHOTO

Benjamin Shinewald

They ought to be a bookish, cross-border dynamic duo, fighting for justice, not in spandex and capes, but in rumpled tweed jackets with ties askew. But the path of Canada's Irwin Cotler and America's Alan Dershowitz have diverged and each are now on a different course.

It wasn't always this way. A generation ago, these legal scholars-cum-activists, born just two years apart, emerged as champions of civil liberties, valiant defenders of Israel and genuine heroes of the Jewish community.

They embodied the best of Jewish intellectual leadership, acting on behalf of Nelson Mandela and Natan Sharansky, co-authoring op-eds about Jonathan Pollard and Iranian incitement, and leading the fight for Soviet Jewry internationally and for civil liberties back home.

Steeped in moderate liberalism, Cotler went on to serve as a Liberal cabinet minister, while Dershowitz stated plainly, "Hey, I'm a left-wing liberal Jew."

And they're great friends. Dershowitz nominated Cotler for the Nobel Peace Prize and dedicated a book to him. And on becoming justice minister, Cotler's first call was to his friend Dershowitz.

Yet, although they began down the same splendid path together, comrades in the central causes of our times, at some point their paths forked, and they went their separate ways.

Today, Cotler, though retired from academia and politics, is hardly retired from the pursuit of justice. At nearly 80, but indefatigable as ever, he dedicates himself to his Montreal-based Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights, an organization dedicated the idea that "one person with the compassion to care and the courage to act can confront evil, prevail and transform history."

Dershowitz, meanwhile, seems to fill his time as a pugnacious pundit on Fox News (is there any other kind?), quickly written issue-of-the-day books and highly paid speaking gigs. His criteria for taking on clients appears to be rooted, not in service of justice, but in which clients get him the most attention and make him more money.

Sure, Dershowitz has long taken on wealthy, high-profile clients and, sure, defense attorneys have a solemn, democratic duty to fearlessly defend clients who, after all, are presumed innocent. But in taking on Jeffrey Epstein, Harvey Weinstein and Donald Trump - and that's just in the last year or so - you get the uneasy feeling that Dershowitz's real clients are his own ego and pocketbook. And that is not justice he is pursuing, but the limelight.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

> *Cotler is all truth, tenacity and* tachlis, *while Dershowitz is all glitz, glamour and* gelt.

Meanwhile, Cotler has taken on such high paying, high profile, high society clients as Saudi dissident Raif Badawi, exiled Venezuelan leader Leopoldo López and Iranian political prisoner Ayatollah Hossein Kazemeyni Boroujerdi.

I should disclose that Cotler has been an acquaintance and role model of mine for decades, though I did not share this piece with him in advance, and it distresses me that it may cause him some discomfort, given his friendship with Dershowitz. As for Dershowitz, I have never met him - I just don't care to fork out the cash to hear him rant and rave at some swanky black-tie gala and then shake his hand.

So for me, Cotler is all truth, tenacity and *tachlis*, while Dershowitz is all glitz, glamour and *gelt*. Cotler humbly serves others, while Dershowitz obnoxiously serves himself.

Serious question: Is Alan Dershowitz a lawyer first or a celebrity first?

Rhetorical question: Could you even imagine Irwin Cotler as anything but a human rights activist first?

But maybe that's the point. In Canada we still manage, generally, to maintain some decorum in our politics, and to cut people down to size. In the United States, celebrity has replaced thoughtfulness, and publicity has replaced process. Perhaps Cotler and Dershowitz just reflect their respective national contexts.

Still, I long for that glorious heyday when not just Cotler, but also Dershowitz, represented the very best of our community, championed the profoundest Jewish and universal principles, and made us all proud.

At least we can all take enormous pride in Canada's Irwin Cotler, whose entire life is testament to the finest ideals of Jewish leadership. ■

Do you disagree with our columnists? Have your say by writing to **cjninfo@gmail.com.**

Jews are finally pushing back

Barbara Kay

Recently I had the pleasure of meeting Izzy Ezagui, the famous IDF soldier who lost his left arm to a mortar shell in Gaza, yet returned to duty as a reservist. Author of the 2018 book, *Disarmed: Unconventional Lessons from the World's Only One-Armed Special Forces Sharp shooter*, Izzy was the keynote speaker at a Hasbara Fellowships event in Toronto, where he addressed a full auditorium of attendees, including many young Hasbara "fellows."

I was Ezagui's warm-up act. (I am very glad I did not have to speak after he did, as his wit and charm, applied to a riveting account of his trauma and recovery, made him the proverbial "tough act to follow.")

Here was a young American Jew who was under no obligation to put his body at the service of the Jewish state. Yet from childhood, Izzy had felt himself drawn to the history of his people. In early adulthood that fascination translated into a wish to participate fully in Israel's defence. He learned fluent Hebrew in mere months of training, because failure to understand could mean disaster to himself or others. Even after the loss of his dominant arm, and struggling to find a new direction in life, Ezagui and a friend, who were enjoying a beach respite, were able to rescue a girl being swept out to sea.

This unexpected accomplishment encouraged him to press for re-enlistment in his unit. Against all arguments and predictions, he found that, through adaptations and novel strategies, he could fulfil his ambitions and once again become an active contributor to Israel's strength rather than accept an invalid status. Ezagui refused to allow victimhood to define him, he met adversity with resilience and he chose optimism and action over bitterness and retreat from engagement with further risk.

To me this narrative is emblematic of Jewish history. Ezagui spoke of the tormenting phantom pain he continued to feel in the place where his arm had been. All thinking Jews feel something like that every time we see evidence of anti-Semitism in a news report of anti-Jewish violence or a chilling remark by an influential leader. It triggers memory of the Holocaust, our permanent dismemberment. Almost daily, news of anti-Semitic aggression forces us to choose our response: will we be freighted with fear and bitterness, or with resilience and optimism?

Izzy Ezagui lost his arm to a mortar shell, yet returned to duty as a reservist.

> *I feel, in spite of rampant anti Semitism, more Jewishly optimistic today than I did 10 years ago.*

Inspired by his story, I spoke about why I feel, in spite of rampant anti-Semitism, more Jewishly optimistic today than I did 10 years ago.

Israel is strong and prosperous. Ten years ago, it seemed like Israel Apartheid Week and the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement would triumph. Today their movement is stalled. Yes, there is anti-Israel commotion on campuses, but they have little support in the public forum. Grassroots pro-Israel groups, that were finding their feet in the early 2000s, are strong on campuses and pushing back hard: Hasbara Fellowships, the AMCHA Initiative, Stand With Us, the Canadian Institute for Jewish Research, the Zioness movement and others. We were on defence in the early 2000s, now we are on offence.

Monitoring groups are doing fantastic work. HonestReporting, NGO Monitor, The Middle East Media Research Institute, The Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting, Palestinian Media Watch and of course UN Watch; their message is powerful and it is heard. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of anti-Semitism is accepted worldwide by states and institutions, including the United Kingdom, Canada and Germany, as well as the European parliament.

While there are fewer liberal North American Jews who are Jewishly affiliated and fewer still who are actively Zionist, those who are have been producing the greatest English-language explosion of intellectual and cultural content since ever. Once there was only *Commentary*, now there is *Commentary* plus *Mosaic Magazine*, *Tablet Magazine* and the *Jewish Review of Books*: These publications are chock-a-block with rich, proudly Jewish historical and polemical content. Podcasts, conferences, online teaching seminars: It seems strange amidst so much surrounding hatred, but we're experiencing an intellectual golden age.

In the court of public opinion, where we used to be defendants, we are now the plaintiffs. ■

News

Jewish communities react to coronavirus

ALEX ROSE
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In the wake of the coronavirus scare spreading around the world, Jewish communities across Canada are taking precautions to protect their members from the disease and to avoid contributing to its spread. Jewish groups that have upcoming international trips scheduled are monitoring the situation to see if they'll still be able to proceed as planned.

On March 8, the March of the Living announced in a press release that it would be postponing its 2020 trip for an indefinite amount of time. However, the press release did make a point to say the organization was working with Poland to schedule the trip for later in the year, "with informed consideration to global health conditions and community needs."

The organization said, because of the postponement, it would also be launching an educational campaign for youths around the world called "Never Means Never" that will teach them to combat anti-Semitism and racism.

"Our educational message, especially in the face of rising anti-Semitism, will be communicated by other means this year," said March of the Living World chair Shmuel Rosenman in the statement. "Even if we are not able to be in Poland, we remain thoroughly committed to our values and our historic role."

A group of TanenbaumCHAT students were scheduled to run in the Jerusalem Marathon on March 20 as part of a group with Shalva, an Israeli non-profit that supports people with disabilities and their families. However, the Jerusalem Marathon was cancelled on March 5, leading the students to cancel their trip.

Mali Gafny in front of Golden Chopsticks' menu. ALEX ROSE PHOTO

"The students are obviously disappointed, as was I after spending the past nine months organizing the trip. However, I am confident that cancelling was the right decision. I suppose that the trip was not meant to be this year," wrote TanenbaumCHAT teacher Jordan Hoffman, the trip's organizer, in an email to *The CJN* on March 5. "Tomorrow, all the students who were registered for the trip will be wearing the shirts that we had made and getting together for a 'damn COVID-19 pizza party' to show that we aren't going to let this get us down."

Large Jewish institutions, such as synagogues, local federations and funeral homes, are also making a point to protect against the coronavirus. Many synagogues are advising participants to limit handshakes and stay home from shul if they are feeling under the weather. For example, an email from Beth Tzedec to its congregants on March 2 said, "Our rabbis ... are no longer hugging or shaking hands to wish congregants a 'Shabbat Shalom.' Instead, join them in finding new ways to wish people a 'Good Shabbos' with a big smile, a wave or even a thumbs up."

Beth Sholom Synagogue in Toronto announced it would close entirely for Purim and cancelled all morning and evening minyan services, as well as megillah reading and Purim celebrations.

In an email to members, the synagogue wrote, "It has come to our attention that there is a threat of the COVID-19 virus that has permeated our community."

Local federations are also taking it upon themselves to prepare their community members to combat the virus as effectively as possible. In the Greater Vancouver area, the Jewish Federation is working with the provincial health authority as the situation evolves, said CEO Ezra S. Shanken in a March 4 email to *The CJN*.

"Sharing information is important in these circumstances, and we brought a key group of community organizations together, including schools, synagogues and other high-traffic organizations, for discussions with health authority representatives last week. We are also in touch with other Jewish Federations across the continent and with Jewish Federations of North America to share information about each community's situation and response," the email said.

Benjamin's Park Memorial Chapel in Toronto has a bright yellow sign at the top of its website imploring people not to attend services if they are feeling under the weather. Marc Benjamin said funeral homes display those kinds of messages like any other space that hosts public gatherings, and added that funeral-goers may be especially vulnerable.

"It often affects not just the elderly, but people with compromised immune systems – somebody who's been at the hospital, or just taking care of their loved one as they pass away for the last 48 hours, for the last week, don't get a lot of sleep, they're not eating," he said.

Dr. Isaac Bogoch, an infectious diseases physician and scientist based out of the University of Toronto, said people should feel comfortable going about their day-to-day lives, and make sure to take reasonable precautions like ensuring good hand hygiene. He said some of the precautions that people are taking, like wearing masks or avoiding Chinese businesses are misguided. Many Chinese businesses, especially restaurants, have been hit hard by the coronavirus scare, Bogoch said, enough that he has been hearing from Chinese restaurants and even gave a talk for the Toronto Chinese Business Association.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17

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Vatican unseals Second World War era archives

RON CSILLAG
rcsillag@thecjn.ca

The Vatican reached a historic turning point on March 2 when it finally unsealed its archives on the wartime papacy of Pope Pius XII, kept secret for decades amid accusations that the pope turned a blind eye to the Holocaust.

At least 200 scholars from around the world have already requested access to the mountain of documents, made available after an inventory that took more than 14 years for Vatican archivists to complete, reported Agence France-Presse.

Prof. Michael Marrus, who for years was Canada's leading voice on the need to open the archives, will not be among them.

Now 79 and retired from the University of Toronto, where he taught history and is the Chancellor Rose and Ray Wolfe professor emeritus of Holocaust studies, Marrus said it's time for a new batch of experts to examine the historical record of the wartime pope.

"I'm ready to pass the torch to another generation," Marrus told *The CJN*.

Since the end of the Second World War, two opposing myths have surrounded the Vatican's role in the Holocaust, Marrus noted: That either Pius secretly collaborated with the Nazis and had every intention of turning the Holy See against the Jews or that the Vatican was a champion of the Jewish people and did what it could for them.

"What was missing, of course, was the archival collections that would establish the truth once and for all," he said.

Governments and the Red Cross slowly released their documents, "and the Vatican did not. It was very frustrating at the time. We were unable to persuade the Vatican that it was in its interest, and the interests of historical truth, to release these documents."

Pope Francis signalled a change a year ago when he announced that the war-era archives would be opened.

"The Church is not afraid of history," he said at the time. The Pius XII papacy was marked by "moments of grave difficulties, tormented decisions of human and Christian prudence, that to some could appear as reticence," Pope Francis told researchers.

Before becoming pope, then Archbishop Eugenio Pacelli served as the Holy See's representative in Germany during the 1920s where he witnessed the early rise of Nazism.

Prof. Michael Marrus

He served as pope from 1939 to 1958.

German historian Hubert Wolf, a specialist on the Pius XII pontificate, was blunt in a recent interview: "There is no doubt that the pope was aware of the murder of Jews," he told the AFP news agency.

Marrus's involvement in the controversy over the Pius archives peaked in 2001, when the International Catholic-Jewish Historical Commission on which he served disbanded after failing to gain access to certain Vatican documents.

At the time, Marrus, one of three Jewish members of the commission, said the body "ran up against a brick wall" after the Vatican released 11 volumes of wartime documents devoted to Pius XII but remained steadfastly silent on further queries. The commission lasted only two years.

Marrus said the documents made public up to then were released with an eye toward the defence of the Vatican.

"The Vatican, like every other government in Europe, was eager to defend its wartime case," he said, adding that the released volumes were "helpful but hardly the basis from which one could draw definitive conclusions."

The millions of pages unsealed this month will take years to comb through, Marrus said, and should shed light not only on the war-era pope, "but the whole apparatus of the government of the Holy See."

Historians who have defended Pius XII have estimated that the Church hid around 4,000 Jews in convents and other institutions during the war.

Some Vatican observers have said the controversy over Pius XII's papacy has held up his elevation to sainthood. ■

JDL Canada head banned from York University

CJN STAFF

The head of the Jewish Defence League of Canada has been banned from Toronto's York University.

Meir Weinstein received a letter on March 2 from the law firm of Lenczner Slaght saying he is "prohibited from entering York University campuses at any time from this day forward for any reason whatsoever."

The order extends to York's three campuses – the main one on Keele Avenue, and those on Bayview Avenue and Dundas Street West.

Failure to comply would mean charges under trespass laws, Weinstein's removal from campus and the pursuit of damages, the letter warned.

William McDowell, the lawyer who signed the letter, referred *The CJN*'s inquiries to officials at York.

Yanni Dagonas, acting chief spokesperson for the university, said in an email, "It is the right of all York community members to express their views within the law and without fear of intimidation or harassment. As such, external groups with the intent to cause potential disruption are not welcome on university property. York reserves the right to issue trespass notices to anyone with similar intent."

York was the site of a violent clash between pro-Israel supporters and a counter-protest organized by Students Against Israeli Apartheid (SAIA) at an event on Nov. 20 sponsored by Herut Canada that brought IDF reservists to Canada.

In a Facebook post, Lauren Isaacs, Herut's president at York, thanked Jewish motorcycle groups and the JDL for providing security at the event. York University president Rhonda L. Lenton has said the school had clarified ahead of the event that student groups are not permitted to arrange their own private security. York also emailed Weinstein on Nov. 20, warning him that the university would remove JDL members if they engaged in "inappropriate behaviour."

Weinstein denied York's claims. "I have never done anything illegal at York University and respected the York University code of conduct when on their property," he said in a statement posted to Facebook on March 4. "It is my opinion that I was singled out by the York University administration. And my opinion is that the York University administration is receptive to the (anti-Israel boycott, divestment and sanctions) campaign against (the) JDL."

Protest at York University on Nov. 20, 2019.

Weinstein said his "targeting" by York is a "violation" of his human rights "and therefore is also anti-Semitic."

He promised to "continue to expose anti-Semitism at York University and bring this information to the attention of the York University administration and government. The groups and persons who promote anti-Semitism at York University are the ones to be banned, not me."

He asked for help "to fight this anti-Semitism."

After the clash, Herut Canada and SAIA had certain privileges suspended at York after a "preliminary internal review." Full privileges were restored to both student groups in January.

Lawyer Dimitri Lascaris, who has represented SAIA in the past, said in an email, "to my knowledge, no member of SAIA York and no supporter of the organization or of the protest that SAIA York organized on Nov. 20 has been banned, suspended or punished in any way."

York is conducting an internal review of the events of Nov. 20 and has hired former Supreme Court of Canada justice Thomas Cromwell to perform an external review, which is due later this month.

Lascaris has submitted a report to Cromwell and the York administration on behalf of SAIA. Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center has also delivered a submission, prepared by law firm Fogler Rubinoff, on "the history of anti-Semitism at York University and the ways the administration has enabled anti-Semitism to fester," according to a press release issued Feb. 28. ■

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Finkelstein appearance at McMaster cancelled

STEVE ARNOLD
SPECIAL TO THE CJN, HAMILTON, ONT.

The student group behind McMaster University's Israel Apartheid Week (IAW) has cancelled a scheduled appearance by anti-Israel activist Norman Finkelstein.

In a brief posting on its Facebook page, the group Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights - McMaster (SPHR) said Finkelstein's scheduled talk was cancelled "due to unforeseen circumstances" and did not "(involve) any external actors or university administration whatsoever."

The decision to scuttle Finkelstein's appearance came two weeks after a letter to McMaster president David Farrar from the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Centre (FSWC) urging him to ban both Finkelstein's appearance and Israel Apartheid Week events planned for later this month.

In an emailed statement following the cancellation, FSWC president and CEO Avi Benlolo welcomed the action.

"By allowing speakers such as Finkelstein to express their hateful views on campuses, universities are contributing to the anti-Semitism and hostile divisive environments Jewish students are experiencing now more than ever before," he wrote. "We are pleased that Finkelstein is no longer scheduled to speak and call on all university leaders to work on ensuring all individuals are vetted before being welcomed to speak to students on campus."

Last year, at the University of Toronto, Finkelstein – described by Benlolo as "a notorious anti-Israel provocateur" – told an audience Israel has no right to defend itself from threats along its Gaza border, even if the lives of Israeli civilians are in danger.

In its initial letter to McMaster's president, FSWC wrote, "Anyone who denies Israel the basic legal and natural right to defend itself, from murderous attacks against its civilians, demonstrates a basic disdain for the value of Jewish life. Under no circumstances should Finkelstein enjoy the privilege and prestige associated with speaking at McMaster or any other Canadian university."

FSWC had also asked McMaster to ban all IAW events after a poster was circulated showing convicted terrorist Lela Khalid holding an AK-47 to fundraise for and advertise Israeli Apartheid Week programming.

Norman Finkelstein

McMaster spokesman Wade Hemsworth said in an emailed statement that the university was not involved in the decision to cancel the Finkelstein event.

Finkelstein is an American political scientist whose primary areas of research are the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the politics of the Holocaust. He has been on the faculty of several American universities until 2007 when he was denied tenure and placed on leave from DePaul University after a high-profile public feud with Harvard professor Alan Dershowitz. He later resigned from the school after coming to an undisclosed settlement.

Finkelstein's criticisms of Israel have been so virulent that in 2008 he was banned from entering the country for 10 years.

SPHR, which describes itself as a non-profit student-based organization advocating "to uphold the rights of the Palestinian people in the face of human rights violations and all forms of racism, discrimination, misinformation and misrepresentation" uses the annual Israel Apartheid Week to advance that agenda.

The 2020 event, slated for March 16 to 20, is to include presentations with titles such as "Unpacking Israeli Propaganda" and "Legacies of Resistance." Another will argue Israeli environmentalism is nothing more than a smokescreen for colonialism.

SPHR said tickets sold for the Finkelstein event will be refunded "within the week" and a new free event will be announced in its place. The group did not respond to requests for comment submitted by email and through its Facebook page. ■

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Controversial speaker will not present at York

PAUL LUNGEN
plungen@thecjn.ca

An event sponsored by the Muslim Students Association (MSA) at York University that was to feature a speaker with a history of anti-Semitic comments has been cancelled. The event, part of Islam Awareness Week, highlighted a talk by Ustadh Daniel Haqiqatjou.

The cancellation came after Jewish organizations complained that Haqiqatjou has a history of problematic attacks on Jews and homosexuals.

The Jewish Defence League (JDL) was first out of the gate, publicizing an email letter to York University president Rhonda Lenton that called on her to cancel the event while noting, "Jewish students on campus have been victims of anti-Semitism for far too long."

The JDL cited several problematic statements made by Haqiqatjou, a Houston-born lecturer on Islam.

Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center (FSWC) also called on Lenton to cancel the on-campus event, arguing that Haqiqatjou was "known for anti-Semitic and homophobic rhetoric." Haqiqatjou's speech in Mississauga, Ont. scheduled for March 5 was also cancelled, FSWC reported.

The Canadian Antisemitism Education Foundation (CAEF) wrote to Lenton, also asking her to prevent the speaking engagement. Permitting Haqiqatjou to speak on campus would point out "the travesty to Canadian values of inclusivity and tolerance and the likelihood that such speeches could jeopardize the safety of Jewish students on campus," CAEF said.

CAEF also called on the university administration to "pay heed to the International Holocaust Remembrance Association (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism, which has been adopted by the Government of Canada" and which has passed second reading as Bill 168 in the Ontario Provincial Parliament.

Adopting the IHRA definition would "make it unacceptable to promote Jew-hatred, anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism on campus," CAEF wrote.

Professors at the University of Toronto have made a similar request at the downtown school.

Andria Spindel, executive-director of CAEF, applauded the university administration for stepping in to cancel the Haqiqatjou speaking engagement.

Yanni Dagonas, acting chief spokesperson for York University said the educational institution "is committed to free speech and to ensuring a safe and respectful environment where community members are able to gather and express diverse ideas.

Daniel Haqiqatjou

"After consulting with the relevant student group they subsequently decided not to proceed with the event," he added.

At least not at York University. Writing on his Twitter page, Haqiqatjou told his followers that, "My Toronto, York University event, *Why Islam Is True*, is rescheduled to Thursday (March 5). Zionists and right wingers threatened to mob. The event will continue *inshallah* but due to security threats from Zionists, will be at a different venue."

Noting the cancellation came only one day before the scheduled event, Spindel asked why York professors had not voiced their opposition to it.

"Where is the faculty that sees this happening and doesn't speak up," she said. "It's time for the adults to speak up. These are children who need to know the difference between right and wrong."

Haqiqatjou has an extensive presence online. His Twitter bio describes him as "The Muslim Skeptic, founder of Masna Institute, writer and lecturer on Islam and modernity."

In a June 9, 2017 item on the Muslim Skeptic web site, titled *Israeli Logic*, Haqiqatjou compares Israel and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, to Nazi Germany and Adolf Hitler, using an image of a massive Nazi rally to illustrate his point.

A Jan. 10, 2019 story titled, *Pornography as Israel's Weapon of Choice*, claimed that in 2002 Israel occupied Ramallah television stations and broadcast pornographic images. Calling Israel a "Zionist terror state," Haqiqatjou wrote, "the promotion of base desires" is a "weapon that the agents of *Shaytan* (Satan) are using in full force today."

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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Chinese restaurant affected by virus fears

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

"Cases of this coronavirus are not going to be restricted to a particular ethnic group or country of origin. We see many countries around the world affected by this. And we will see many more countries around the world affected by this. So singling out an individual country and businesses owned by members of or people who might originate from that original country is completely unfounded," he said.

One Chinese restaurant that believes it has been hit hard by the coronavirus scare is the kosher restaurant Golden Chopsticks. Owner Mali Gafny said since around mid-January, sales have dipped by 75 per cent, by far the worst business her restaurant has seen in its 23 years. She said people have been calling asking about the coronavirus and if their cooks had recently travelled to China. She said the cooks have all been living in Canada for a long time, and have even been using masks and gloves recently as an extra precaution. But business got so bad that the Kashruth Council of Canada (COR) posted on Facebook alerting people to the restaurant's decline in business.

Richard Rabkin, managing director of COR, said it felt confident attributing the drop in business at least partially to the coronavirus scare because of the many inquiries the restaurant had been receiving about the disease, and also because Chinese businesses across the GTA were seeing their sales drop by similar numbers.

"COR supports its kosher establishments and wants them to succeed. Our proprietors are members of our community and as such we feel a responsibility to help them whenever we can, especially in a situation like this when the cause is due to misinformation," Rabkin said in an email on March 2. "Since our post, we have been advised that some kosher consumers have rushed to support Golden Chopsticks. Our post was viewed almost 90,000 times and was picked up by other Jewish media outlets on social media. We are gratified to see the spirit of *achdut* (unity) in our community in that when Jews are in need of assistance, others come to their aid. COR was pleased that we could play a small part in that important endeavour." ■

Muslim speaker cancelled at York

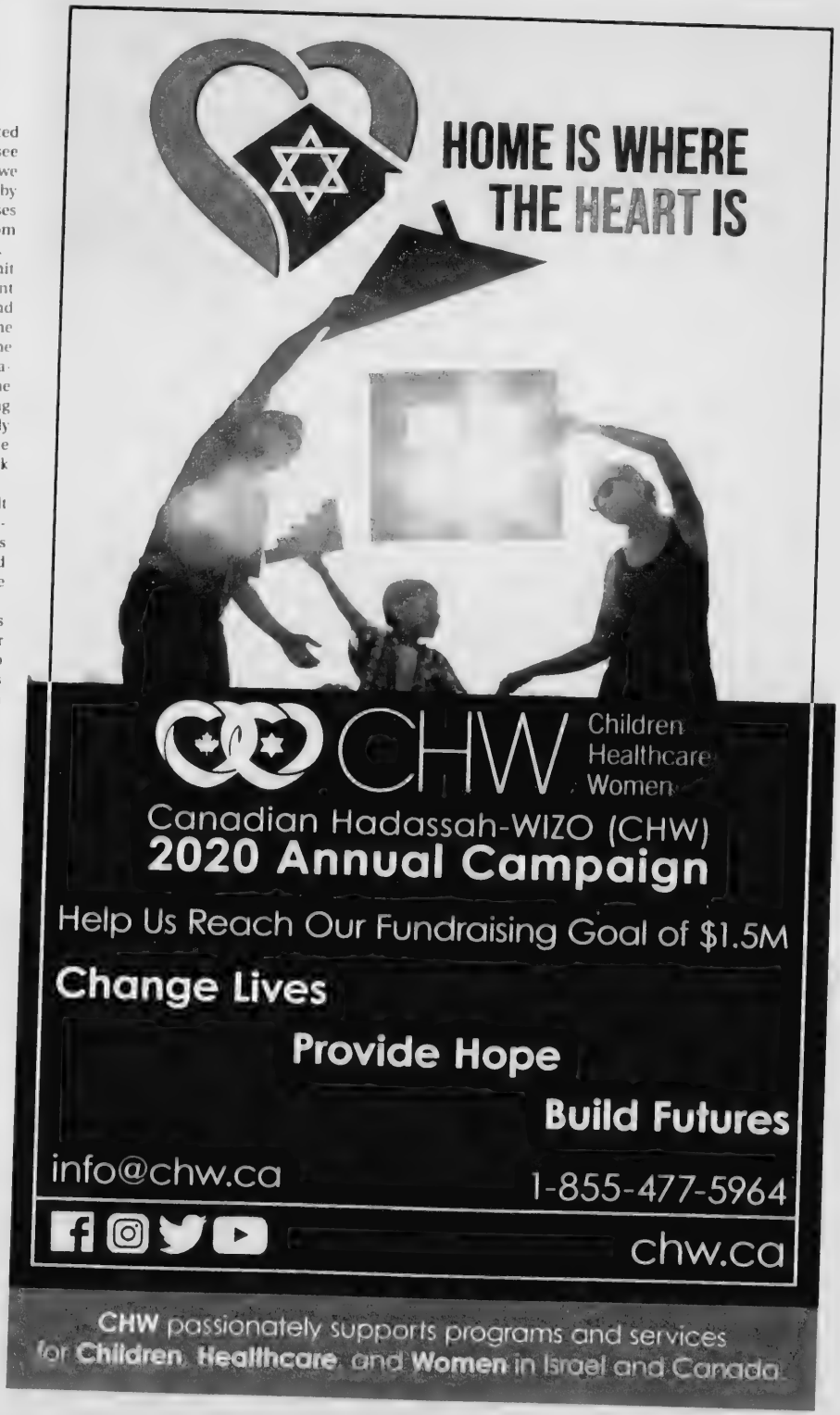
CONTINUED FROM THE PREVIOUS PAGE

A Feb. 18, 2019 article in Muslim Skeptic titled, *University Prof. Claims Israel Is Testing Weapons on Palestinian Children*, quotes an article in which a law professor cites Palestinians children for the claim that Israel tests new weapons on them.

The story includes a photo of Netanyahu juxtaposed next to one of Hitler, along with the claim that, "It doesn't take a genius to see the parallel between what Israel is doing to Palestinians and what history books describe the Nazis doing in conducting cruel, inhumane, genocidal experiments on their captives."

In a March 30, 2019 article about Brunei's crackdown on homosexuals, Haqiqatjou presents "just the news to cheer you up. The Muslim country of Brunei is implementing *hudud* (a penalty mandated by God) to crack down on sodomites and fornicators!"

He then quotes a Reuters story saying Brunei is implementing "Islamic laws that would allow death by stoning for adultery and homosexuality." ■



THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
MARCH 12, 2020

Auction house continues to sell Nazi memorabilia

JANICE ARNOLD
Jarnold@thecjn.ca, MONTREAL

A Quebec City auction house is refusing to withdraw from sale Nazi memorabilia despite objection from the Jewish community.

"We reiterate our call to the owners of Encan en Ville to look to their conscience and, in the interest of civic responsibility, to have these symbols of hatred and the destruction of innocent lives removed from auction and donated to institutions that can present them in an appropriate educational context," stated Rabbi Reuben Poupko, Quebec co-chair of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA).

The offending items, listed on the website of Encan en Ville, are two Nazi honorary medals, as well as another medal and a penknife that CIJA says are associated with the Ku Klux Klan.

One of the Nazi medals is a double-sworded War Merit Cross, which, according to Holocaust historian Dieter Pohl, was a distinction awarded to Nazi killers from the Waffen-SS and concentration camp staff.

CIJA says it held lengthy discussion with Encan en Ville co-owner Nicolas Marcoux, but was unable to change his mind.

This Nazi medals put up for auction are an offence to the memory of the victims of the Holocaust, CIJA says. PHOTO FROM ENCAN EN VILLE WEBSITE

Rabbi Poupko said, "While trading Nazi memorabilia and other items related to racist ideologies is not illegal in Canada, it is morally indefensible to allow entities to profit from items emblematic of the genocide of Jews and the murderous persecution of African Americans.

"Furthermore, trading such items may make them available to extremists for the purposes of hate propaganda."

Marcoux told Radio-Canada that he went ahead with dealing in these items out of "a duty to memory."

"The objects recall things. They remind us of the obligation to be better informed, to better understand what has passed," Marcoux said.

Marcoux said he understands the reaction these items arouse in people and that they could be misused.

That is the reason cautions were placed with each of the controversial items about what they represent and the company requires any interested buyers to clearly identify themselves on the platform.

"If we knew that it could fall into the hands of someone who wanted to make a promotion, we would terminate the trans action," he said.

In February, Avi Benlolo, CEO of the Toronto-based Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies, said he had been successful in persuading a Montreal auctioneer to remove Nazi memorabilia for sale.

On Feb. 12, Encans en Ligne Montreal withdrew advertisements it had posted to the online QuebecHiBid.com after being contacted by Benlolo.

The items included metal badges with swastikas, a figurine of a Nazi eagle, and two daggers, one inscribed with "*Alles Für Deutschland*" and the other with its English translation, "Everything for Germany."

The company told CBC the items had been received on consignment and it was not aware of their significance.

They were returned to the client, who had told Encans en Ligne they were Second World War items that he had inherited.

Benlolo said the sale of Nazi memorabilia is growing in Canada.

"That's partly because there is a rising tide of Nazi movements and white supremacist movements collecting and venerating and celebrating this kind of ideology." ■

John Syrtash
B. A. (Hon.), LL.B.

Associate
Garfin Zeidenberg LLP
Family Lawyer & Mediator
for 39 years

Mr. Syrtash is Senior Family Law Associate to Garfin Zeidenberg LLP, celebrating 39 years as a Family Law lawyer this year.

Suite 800, 5255 Yonge Street (at Norton) just north of Mel Lastman Square, Civic Centre Subway station, Toronto, ON M5G 1E6. John Syrtash can be reached at (416) 642-5410, Cell (416) 886-0359.

The Blossoming "Winner" Market

by John T. Syrtash

In my recent article I discussed the affect of a hot real estate market in the Toronto area when considering separation. **If you are "splitting up" then you should take advantage of the current Spring market in the Toronto GTA right away.** Many clients have waited years to do so worried that there won't be enough equity to split. I also explained that if there is any disagreement then call a competent family law lawyer to help force sale or try marriage counselling. Ms. Orly Katz of Sutton Group Admiral Realty predicted a hot market in the GTA (Toronto) as my guest columnist in that article. In today's she explains how hot the Market has blossomed and the strategies that sellers could follow. If the spouses cannot agree to sell, the recent drop in interest rates and surge of sales for vendors could prompt many to have the Court order a sale, if necessary. This is not a time to hesitate.

Ms. Orly Katz – Sellers: You Won the Lottery!

Ready? The Hot Spring Market is here!! It will only last till June. With continued low inventory and consistent demand, we have seen multiple offers in January and February 2020. The Bank of Canada cut interest rates by half a point to 1.25% last week. We are anticipating that the Federal government will loosen the Mortgage Stress Test. This means lower borrowing costs and more people that are able to get mortgages. So, what's Spring 2020 in the GTA going to look like? For Sellers it will be the second-best time to sell in 50 years. Sellers will feel like they just won the lottery! If you're thinking of selling because you're over leveraged, you're downsizing, or you have an investment property or any reason: NOW is the time to sell!! Many properties have already been selling in January and February for over ask without conditions: No financing. No inspection. Nothing. Spring has just begun! Buyers know that if they find what they want, they better be prepared to come in with a very strong offer or be very disappointed. Is it also in my area? This is happening all over the GTA. What kind of property? Detached, townhouses, condos, every type of property. Get ready. Sellers' Market is here Toronto!

Orly Katz

Visit www.freemychild.com; www.spousalsupport.com; www.garfinzeidenberg.com.

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Sponsored by the Community for Jewish Culture of B'Nai Brith Canada.

Keshet trains leaders on LGBTQ inclusion

ALEX ROSE
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Dozens of representatives from 14 Jewish organizations gathered at the Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre (MNJCC) in downtown Toronto on March 4 for a first-of-its-kind training on LGBTQ issues in the Jewish community hosted by Keshet, a U.S.-based organization that focuses on equality in Jewish life for LGBTQ people. The session was part of Keshet's leadership project, which trains the heads of Jewish organizations to build a yearlong LGBTQ inclusion plan for their organizations, and the participants in attendance represented the UJA Federation of Greater Toronto, various Hillels, synagogues, care homes and more.

Cara Gold, manager of downtown Jewish life at the MNJCC, said that these organizations and institutions have realized for some time that LGBTQ inclusion work is important, but there has been a lack of specifically Jewish tools and resources for the proper training and support.

"I think a lot of organizations like to say that their doors are open and that they're aware and welcoming of all. That's a frequent mentality," she said. "But the boots on the ground, day-to-day (work) of centring LGBTQ people in organizations whether it be doing programming specifically for them, ensuring that they feel safe in the programming that's already happening and, even bigger than that, having LGBTQ leadership as a part of the organization – is the way that we need to be moving. And that's the next step of where we need to go as a community."

The daylong training alternated between educational presentations and interactive activities. One of the Keshet representatives gave a talk about the history of LGBTQ Jews in Canada and another spoke about differences between sex at birth, sexual orientation and gender identity, both with input and questions from the audience.

Rabbi Micah Buck-Yael, director of education and training for Keshet, said that the organizations participating in the leadership project would check in with a Keshet coach five times over the next year to monitor their progress and to gain access to resources and support as they bring their idea of LGBTQ inclusion for their organization into reality.

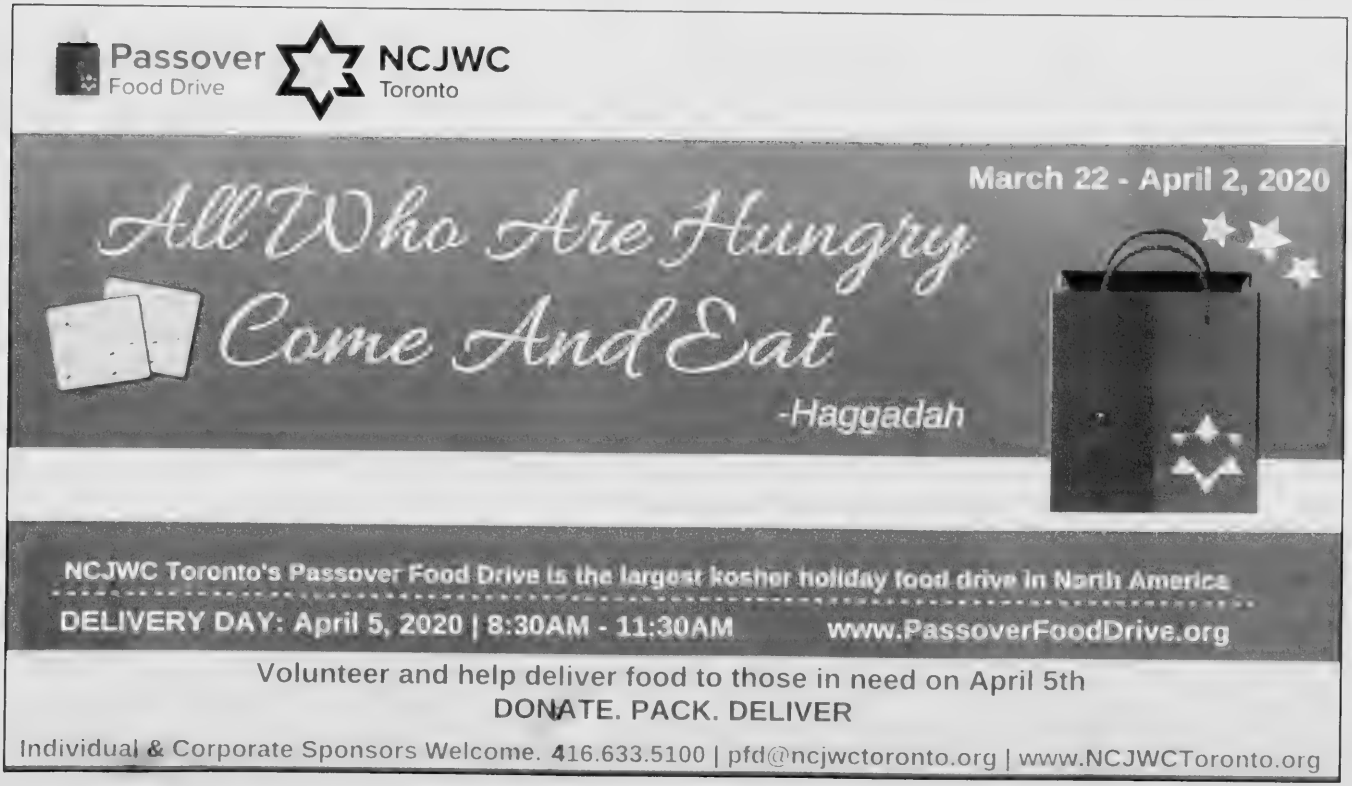
"That looks different for each organization. We present a spectrum related to inclusive communities, and we help organizations understand where they are today and where they would like to be tomorrow, in six months, in a year, in 10 years. We envision a world in which all people are welcome to be their whole selves in the Jewish community, are treated with respect and sensitivity in all interactions and where communities have diverse leadership in all sorts of ways at all levels of leadership," he said.

Representatives from various Jewish organizations participate in Keshet's training on issues faced by LGBTQ Jews.

In terms of more specific goals, Rabbi Buck-Yael said centring the experience of transgender, gender non-conforming and non-binary people is a priority for Keshet, as those people are often not prioritized in many conversations about LGBTQ issues. He also said it's important for organizations to think about the ways people's overlapping identities will affect their lives. For example, a black woman will experience sexism differently than a white woman would and racism differently than a black man would. That kind of thinking helps organizations be more mindful of the needs of all of their members.

Rabbi Buck-Yael also stressed that Keshet does not try to tell people how to be Jewish but rather to support different types of Jewish communities working through LGBTQ issues in ways that make sense for them.

"We don't work to provide Jewish legal solutions for any particular community. Religious communities have their own rabbis for a reason," he said. "What we seek to do is provide communities with information, both on what identities people are experiencing, and on what sorts of barriers people might be currently facing. And we help them take that information and then, within their own framework of what it means to be Jewish, understand where their work is." ■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Guest Voice

Remembering our roots on International Refugee Shabbat

Elise Herzig

I recently found a tin box that was placed on the uppermost shelf of my father's closet. As we together sifted through the photographs, identity papers and important documents inside, I followed his journey from Poland to Germany, France and, ultimately, Canada.

For many, an iconic photo of the Holocaust is a 1943 black-and-white picture of a young boy raising his hands in the Warsaw Ghetto as an SS soldier points a sub machine gun at the child. Unfortunately, as social media did not exist in 1943, this photo serves as a historical artifact rather than as a call to action.

Global reaction was vastly different when a photograph of three-year-old Syrian refugee Alan Kurdi garnered world attention in 2015. The photo depicts a child's body washed ashore. Alan, his mother, father and five-year-old brother boarded an inflatable boat with the intent of leaving Turkey and making it to the shores of Europe for safety. The boat ride was only a three-mile trip – a relatively short distance to rebuild their lives. Tragically, the boat capsized and Alan, his brother and his mother drowned.

While the Syrian civil war was already in its fourth year, it was Alan's photo and story that drew attention to the Syrian crisis in a way that the news reports of millions of refugees and hundreds of thousands of deaths had been unable to do. Like many others, the Jewish community saw Alan's loss of life as a call to action to help.

Just like many Canadian Jews failed in their attempts to bring their families to Canada during the Holocaust, so did the Kurdi family's Canadian relatives fail in their attempts to obtain entry for Alan's family.

In 2015, the Jewish community mobilized and supported work by JIAS (Jewish Immigrant Aid Services) Toronto to help refugees. As JIAS is the only Canadian Jewish social service agency with the status of a Sponsorship Agreement Holder, we were able to resettle refugees from abroad through private sponsorship and engage community members that wanted to make a difference.

Our volunteers' and donors' commitment to help the stranger is steeped in our Jewish values. Our prayers and commandments remind us that we were slaves and strangers in a strange land. This shapes us, and shapes how we treat others.

As Jews, we are commanded 36 times in the Torah to welcome the stranger, such as this instance in Chapter 19 of Leviticus: "The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord, your God."

JIAS has a 98-year history of welcoming and supporting Jewish immigrants and refugees. As the world refugee crisis is at an all-time high – with one person forcibly displaced almost every two seconds as a result of conflict or persecution – this commandment is more important than ever before.

Unfortunately, the impact of Alan's photo has waned. There are close to a million displaced Syrians who are at risk of freezing to death during the largest exodus of the Syrian war. Do we need another photograph or is there something we can do now?

We should be proud that Canada is a world leader in refugee resettlement. We should gather and share knowledge to debunk myths, promote tolerance and help build a stronger and more inclusive Canada.

We should commit to having at least one conversation with someone who has expressed doubt about welcoming refugees to Canada or has even made disparaging remarks about immigrants and refugees.

We should be conscious of the fact that more than 70 million people around the world today have been forced to leave their homes due to conflict and persecution. Among them are nearly 26 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18.

On the weekend of March 20, you can participate in International Refugee Shabbat. It can be as simple as a discussion around a Shabbat table with family and friends.

And we should find a way to help another family create a tin box with pictures and documents that chronicle their successful journey to Canada.

For more information on how you or your synagogue can participate in International Refugee Shabbat, go to jiastoronto.org/events. ■

Elise Herzig is the executive director of JIAS Toronto.

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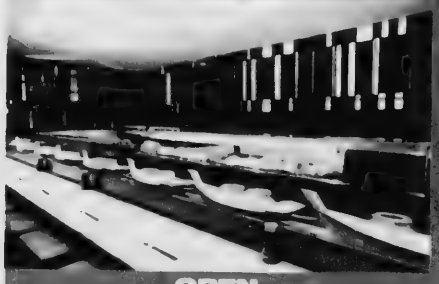

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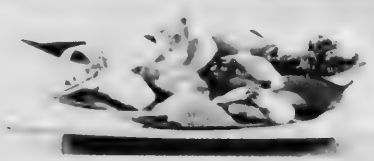

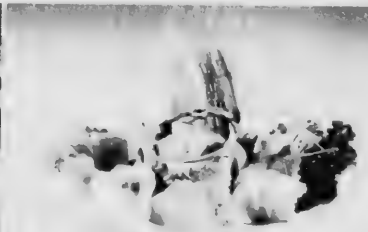

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Prenuptial agreement is not always effective

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

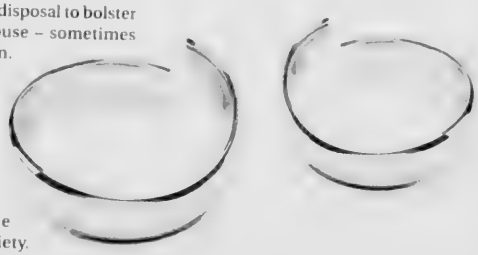
Secondly, we must clearly reframe *get*-refusal and call it what it is: a vicious form of abuse caused by abusive individuals. The notion of negotiating or extorting the *get* is a relatively new phenomenon in our long history, gaining traction only in the last 50 or so years, meaning it was a learned tactic that has somehow become dangerously hegemonic.

Thirdly, we cannot sit passively and let a husband's refusal to grant a *get* be normatively recognized as his free will, rather than a gross domestic abuse violation that controls the legal, halakhic, psychological, social, and marital/sexual destiny of his spouse. We must combat manipulation or subversion of religion by recalcitrant husbands who may become more powerful than the entire community and its leadership.

As a community, we have settled into the reality that the *agunah* problem is one to be managed, not solved. This is not moral or halakhic. In Chapter 16 of Deuteronomy, the Torah teaches, *Tzedek, tzedek tirdof* ("Justice, justice you shall pursue"). The status quo is simply unacceptable. We must challenge the notion that a *get* is negotiable.

Moreover, it is not the persistence of the abuse of *get*-refusal that is in and of itself noteworthy. Abuse, power and violence, after all, are normative characteristics of conjugal relationships and will be deployed in all relationships, Jewish or not. There are bad people. Some of them are men who happen to be religious, and these bad individuals will use whatever tools they have at their disposal to bolster themselves in their abuse – sometimes that includes religion. This is certainly prevalent in many other faiths.

What *is* noteworthy is the reluctance among our community and leadership to mend the gash in the fabric of our own society. In other words, my research has shown that the abuse (including *get*-refusal) is actually normative to some extent, but it is how the abuse is being addressed (or not addressed, more accurately) that is non-normative, particularly in Toronto. It is shameful that we allow this to happen.



After identifying *get*-refusal as abuse, placing the problem on those who refuse a *get* and deciding to finally no longer permit this behaviour, here are my top three calls to action:

1) We must unlearn that refusing a *get* or even negotiating for a *get* is acceptable behaviour upon the breakdown of a marriage. Women should not have to leverage their freedom simply in order to level the playing field. The *get* must be separate from, prior to and without the conditions of regular divorce negotiations. We must teach this to our children, especially our sons. We must speak from pulpits, give classes and homework, write and talk about this amongst our friends. We must re-educate our community.

2) We must insist that all batei din (rabbinic courts), including the Toronto beit din, employ the most basic, uncontested and traditional tools they have at their disposal. They must follow the halakhic protocol all legitimate batei din follow stemming from the *harkhakot* (distancing mechanisms) of 12th-century French rabbi Rabbeinu Tam – they must issue *hazmanot* (summonses) and *seruvim* (orders of contempt) in order for communal sanctions known as *herem* (excommunication) to exert pressure on recalcitrant spouses, including shaming, "e-shaming" and ostracism.

Disturbingly, a few years ago, Rabbi Asher Vale, who writes a column in this paper, said at a public event that the Toronto beit din doesn't take these measures so as to prevent potential embarrassment of the beit din if someone was to ignore the orders. The way I see it, the fact that the court doesn't issue these orders is the embarrassment. Not recognizing our hidden and silenced women is shameful. These mechanisms would work well in our Canadian communities. They would actually empower the beit din and, most importantly, would send a message to communities at large, and abusive men in particular, that there will be consequences for their inaction.

We also must insist that batei din work efficiently – not delaying or postponing divorce proceedings, not insisting on the potential for *shalom bayit* (peace in the home) where there is abuse present – and transparently (after all, they work for the entire community, we ought to know how they do so).

To illustrate this point, I look to one of the most notorious *get*-refusers in the world. There is a man who has been walking around freely for over 13 years, living his life in the United States, and he has remarried, while his previous wife is still chained to him, as he has refused to give her a *get*. A civil divorce was issued in 2007, but if you've been following this notorious saga, you know he has wielded even more power than legitimate American batei din and the Chief Rabbinate of Israel. So far, no one has been able to put an end to this *get*-refuser's abuse. Some of his family members, who fully support him, live in Toronto. I learned this by coincidence – or divine intervention – a few years ago.

I can't help thinking that it is incumbent upon all of us to "lean in" to the *harkhakot* of Rabbeinu Tam so that we not stand idly by, supporting the abuse that is *get*-refusal.

The abuse that is hiding in our midst, the abuse that, just because we may not see it, doesn't mean it isn't there.

3) Support *agunot* and their children, make them feel welcome in the community and at synagogue. Invite them over, call them up, help them out, be inclusive.

Perhaps just as importantly, do the opposite for the recalcitrant spouse. Do not welcome them in synagogues, do not give them *kibbudim* (honours) there. Do not do business with them. Do not invite them to your homes or simchas. Do not include them in your community in any way. They must understand that there are consequences to their recalcitrance.

It is a sad state of affairs that women refused a *get* in Toronto have no support. *Get*-refusal should and can be solved using both legal and social methods, yet our community is refusing not only to look outside itself for remedies, but is refusing to look inside itself and take responsibility, thereby enabling this injustice in our midst to endure.

As you celebrate Purim, with many dressing up to retell the story of Esther, remember that behind those masks may be an abused woman who is hidden and silenced. Just because you can't see it doesn't mean it isn't there. ■

Yael Machtinger is a professor of law and society at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York and studies intersections between law and religion. She is currently under contract for a book on the first comprehensive, qualitative study of Jewish divorce-refusal and the first comparative study between Toronto and New York. She can be contacted at yaelmachtingerphd@gmail.com.

INTERNATIONAL

Israel set to quarantine all travellers flying in

March of the Living postponed due to coronavirus; Netanyahu calls for worldwide co operation

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF
JERUSALEM

In Israel, 14 people were added last Sunday evening to the list of those who have contracted the coronavirus, including the first in the country whose source of infection was unknown, bringing the total number of cases to 39.

Israeli Health Minister Yaakov Litzman said Monday morning, as *The CJN* was going to press, that it was likely there would be an announcement later in the day that travellers from all over the world will be required to enter home quarantine after entering Israel.

Litzman told Army Radio that a wider set of protocols was a "necessary step."

The health minister dismissed as "fake news" the suggestion that casting such a broad net would be an attempt to not single out the United States, where infection rates appear to be rocketing. He also denied that political considerations were tainting his ministry's decisions, saying that there was "no problem" when Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke with U.S. Vice-President Mike Pence about the matter on Sunday.

On Monday, March 9, Netanyahu initiated a video conference with seven European leaders, in an effort to promote better regional co-ordination in the fight against the spreading coronavirus.

"I welcome this opportunity to have this video conference, because I think that we can help our countries, and help each other, by sharing information and certain activities, because I know that time is of the essence – both your time and our countries' time," Netanyahu told the leaders.

At the beginning of his remarks, Netanyahu made three suggestions. For one, he proposed Europe join the Israeli-U.S. effort to improve ways to test people for the deadly virus.

On Sunday, Netanyahu had spoken with Pence, and the two men agreed to hold follow-up talks between the Israeli and American teams dealing with the crisis.

"The talks will be held in order to advance technological and scientific co-operation on the issue of the coronavirus and to discuss joint ways of dealing with the challenges posed by the virus," The Prime Minister's Office said in a statement.

The empty departure halls at Israel's Ben Gurion Airport on March 8, as people are cancelling trips due to the fear of the coronavirus. FLASH90 PHOTO

"The ultimate goal is to have home tests, just like you do for pregnancy or for HIV, that people can test themselves," Netanyahu told the European leaders in the video conference, which was held in a small room at the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem.

"When that happens we can separate more effectively and more efficiently healthy people from sick people. This is good for health and it's very good for our economy, because we're going to run into serious problems of mass quarantines, and you can't run economies that way. So we're pooling our research people with their research people."

The prime minister urged the European leaders from Italy, Austria, Hungary, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria and Cyprus to contribute to the effort if they think they have the scientific and technological abilities to do so.

Italy, with over 7,300 people infected and more than 350 deaths, is the European country hit the hardest by COVID-19. By contrast, not a single case is known in Cyprus.

"It has to be a worldwide effort. It's not who gets there first, but how do we all get there first," Netanyahu said.

The prime minister also suggested creating "safe air hubs" in Europe to mitigate the damage caused by disrupted chains due to constrictions on air travel.

"We can designate airports for us, for all of us. And we say, this is a clean airport. We apply consistent efforts to keep it clean. We scrub it, we disinfect it, all the time – around the clock. And we also test the people who work there all the time," Netanyahu suggested.

"This can also be a meeting ground for leaders, for technologists, where they could actually meet and not just be reliant on the Internet, as we're doing right now," he added.

Finally, he proposed that every participating government appoint "points of contact" to continue the dialogue and exchange "best practices," since every country is having different experiences in fighting the coronavirus.

Israel has already required returning Israelis from several countries to self-quarantine, and barred foreigners from a slew of European and Asian countries. Some 80,000 Israelis are now reported to be in self-quarantine, and large events such as concerts and sporting matches have been cancelled.

Israelis have also been advised against all non-vital international travel.

This has had a negative effect on El Al, Israel's national carrier. On Friday, March 6, El Al cancelled a flight to San Francisco and several others to a number of European cities, with a senior company official calling it "an unprecedented crisis."

Flights that left for San Francisco Friday morning were combined due to the low number of passengers on each plane.

In Europe, the Israeli airline was cancelling some flights to Berlin, Barcelona and Zurich. All three cities are located in countries which Israel began restricting the entry of non-nationals to on Friday as part of efforts to slow the spread of the virus.

El Al was also expected to cancel flights to Munich, Budapest, Amsterdam, Brussels, Bucharest, Vienna and Marseille.

On Wednesday, El Al fired some 600 permanent workers as it grapples with ongoing financial losses caused by the virus outbreak.

Meanwhile, organizers of the March of the Living on Sunday said the annual Holocaust commemoration in Poland has been postponed from its April date due to the outbreak.

Poland has seen 11 cases of the COVID-19 virus and no deaths, according to local reports on Sunday.

A rescheduled date for the annual commemoration, which was originally set for April 21 at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, has yet to be announced.

The delay marked the first time since the March of the Living's founding in 1988 that the annual event was interrupted, the organization said.

Two weeks ago, Israel suspended indefinitely all school trips to Poland, where the Israeli Education Ministry helps facilitate tours of death camps for hundreds of thousands of Israeli students.

The Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum recommended earlier last week that "travel agencies and organizers of trips to the Memorial to desist from the arrival of people from places found to be infected." ■

Timesofisrael.com
With files from JTA

Opinion

What it's like for me in quarantine

Uriel Heilman
MODIN, ISRAEL, JTA

When our seventh day of quarantine began with a knock on the door from a guy in a hazmat suit, it was almost a relief finally to have a visitor in the house.

He had come to test my wife and me for coronavirus. My four children eyed the man warily as he unpacked the testing kits at our dining room table.

Barely halfway through a mandatory 14-day quarantine, we were beginning to go a little stir crazy. Our kids, who range in age from two to 10, could not attend school or leave home. Our living room was littered with board games and the remains of half-finished art projects. We were starting to run low on some essentials. Articles with quarantine recommendations often list things like bingeworthy TV shows, advice for working from home or how to exercise and eat right. They don't include many tips for keeping four young children occupied or a family of six from going insane.

It wasn't until after we awoke on our first morning in northern Italy for a much-anticipated, first-ever family ski vacation in Europe that we realized we had landed in the newest coronavirus hot spot.

The epicentre of the outbreak was a three-hour drive away, in the Lombardy region near Milan, and we were in the Dolomite Mountains some 200 kilometres away. That evening, however, as increasingly worrisome reports proliferated about the virus' rapid spread, we began to grow anxious. By the next night, we had decided to cut our trip short and fly back to Israel, mostly to try to avoid a possible quarantine order.

But the morning after we landed, we learned that anybody returning from Italy after midnight the night before would be required to be isolated at home for two weeks. Our flight had landed at 1 a.m.

Within hours, the quarantine was extended retroactively, and within days a growing list of countries joined the mandatory quarantine list: France, Austria, Germany, Switzerland. Inside our apartment, however, all this was simply background noise. Our main focus was to get through the next 14 days with no school and no extracurricular activities. Also, no supermarket runs, no walks, no cleaning lady, no Purim and no seeing other people.

Incredibly, our friends and community really stepped up to help. My phone buzzed incessantly with messages of sympathy and offers to drop off food, books, games and necessities. Unsolicited cakes and cookies showed up at our doorstep. At least once a day we got a call from the Israeli health authorities checking in on us.

Our yard is about 15 feet below street level, and nearly every day someone comes to the fence that overlooks it to say hello. We've taken to calling it the "Shouting Wall."

One of our first acts under quarantine was to set up an online supermarket order. When the deliveryman arrived with our groceries, I opened the door, stepped back 6 feet and explained the situation.

He quickly backed away, a frightened look on his face. "It's all for you!" he said, gesturing to the packages and running for the building stairwell.

"Wait! What about the crates?" I called out.

"Keep them!" he cried, already out of sight. "I have a family! I have children at home!"

"We're not sick," I shouted after him. "It's just that we got back from Italy yesterday! You can have the crates back."

"I wish you good health. But I'm not coming back! They're yours!"

The irony of having become objects of pity and charity because of our "misfortune" at having taken a European ski vacation isn't lost on us. And as we count down the days, trying to keep our nervousness at bay every time someone coughs or has a headache, we're reading the news about the virus' spread with growing alarm.

Even once our quarantine is over, we won't be in the clear. We'll be out in the world with the rest of you, at risk of contamination. In some ways, quarantine is a protective cocoon.

Like spending a lot of time with family, it's a mixed blessing. In any case, I'd like to wish all people around the world good health and a hearty "l'chaim." Unfortunately, I've run out of scotch to do a proper toast. ■

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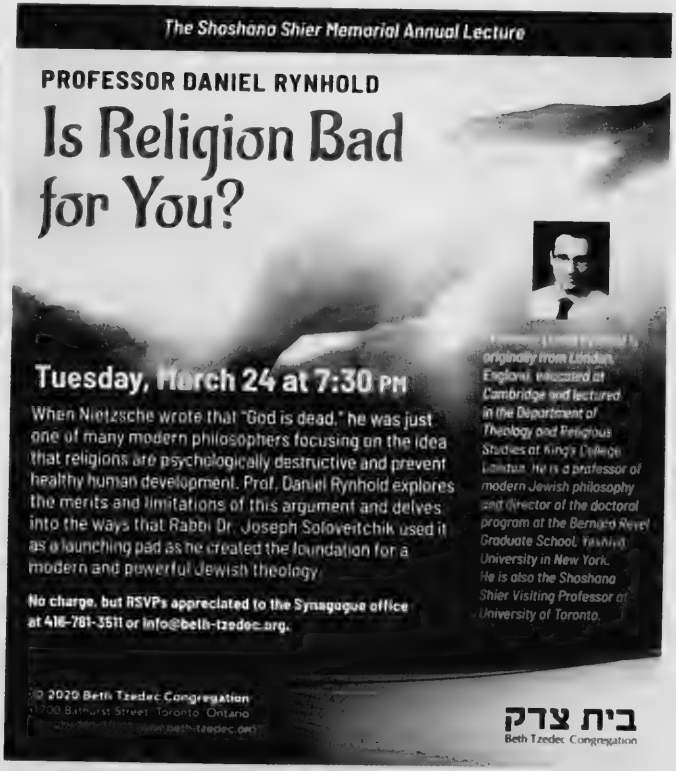
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originally from London, England, educated at Cambridge and lectured in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at King's College London. He is a professor of modern Jewish philosophy and director of the doctoral program at the Bernard Revel Graduate School, Yeshiva University in New York. He is also the Shoshana Shier Visiting Professor at University of Toronto.
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Analysis

Do the Arab votes even count anymore?

David Horovitz
JERUSALEM

In limbo for days as it awaited the results of the March 2 elections, Israel is likely to remain in limbo even now the figures are finally confirmed – with the essential character of the country potentially at stake.

Exit polls on March 2 indicated that Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud had outscored his main rival, Benny Gantz's Blue and White party, and that Netanyahu's bloc – Likud, right-wing Yamina, and the two ultra-Orthodox parties Shas and United Torah Judaism was heading for 60 seats in the 120-member Knesset. Had they been confirmed, those figures would have put Netanyahu firmly in the driver's seat to build a coalition – needing just one defector from the opposition side, or, failing that, able to pressure opposition parties to join him in a unity government or risk being blamed for sending the country to yet a fourth round of elections.

With all votes counted though, however, Likud has indeed remained the biggest party (with 36 seats to Blue and White's 33), but Netanyahu's bloc of natural allies totals only 58 seats, three short of a Knesset majority, massively complicating the coalition-building process.

Simple arithmetic might suggest that if Netanyahu commands the support of 58 MKs, Gantz must have the backing of the other 62, and that Blue and White should thus be able to build a majority. But simple arithmetic does not account for all the complexities of Israel's political reality. While Blue and White indeed leads a bloc of 62 MKs who all appear united in seeking to prevent a new Netanyahu coalition, those 62 MKs are not all united behind a potential prime minister Benny Gantz.

Gantz himself made explicit in the final days of the campaign that he would not helm a coalition dependent in any way, shape or form on the support of the Joint List of mainly Arab parties, which rose to a historic high of 15 seats. In a Channel 12 television interview Gantz said he would not only exclude the Joint List from any coalition he heads, but also that he would not build a minority coalition that depended on the outside support or even the abstention of the Joint List.

Avigdor Liberman, head of the hawkish but anti-Netanyahu Yisrael Beytenu party (seven seats), meanwhile, has reiterated endlessly that he, too, will not be part of any coalition dependent on the Joint List. And the Joint List, for its part, has said it won't sit in a coalition with Gantz unless he walks back his insistence on a "Jewish majority" coalition and opposes the annexation of West Bank territory. Oh, and the Joint List is also unwilling to join a coalition in which Liberman holds a ministerial role.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu explains his arithmetic that subtracts Arab votes from his calculations. YONATAN SINDEL/FLASH90 PHOTO

What all that means, in short, is that while there are 62 MKs apparently determined to block a Netanyahu coalition, there are nowhere near 62 MKs with the common ground to form a coalition under Gantz.

Despite the slide back from 60 seats to 58 for his bloc as the actual count replaced the projections, Netanyahu was still insisting he had won a great victory.

He was also striving to delegitimize the representatives of the Arab electorate – convening a televised meeting of the MKs in his bloc at which he used a whiteboard to try to bend the Knesset arithmetic to his needs.

"The people's decision is clear. The right-wing Zionist camp consists of 58 seats. The left-wing Zionist camp, including Liberman who has joined it, consists of 47 seats," Netanyahu said and wrote, including Yisrael Beytenu as part of the left. "The Joint List, which denigrates our soldiers and opposes the very existence of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, as the national state of the Jewish people… is of course not part of this equation," he continued, and thus had no place at all in his calculations. "And that was the will of the people," he declared.

Netanyahu's strategy is designed to offset two challenges to his continued prime ministership: a bid by Blue and White to initiate legislation barring a politician under indictment, like him, from serving as prime minister – which would require Joint List support to pass; and the possibility that Gantz, Liberman and the Arab MKs will abandon their stated commitments and nonetheless form a viable coalition.

The position Netanyahu espoused was more radical than those he has taken in the past

The prime minister has previously sought to demonize the Arab electorate – including with a notorious 2015 campaign cry that Arab voters were streaming to the polls, as though this were somehow illicit, and the deployment of Likud activists with cameras to deter voters at Arab polling stations last April. And he has worked intermittently in the past year, when it matched his interests, to bring into the political mainstream the Kahanist disciples of Otzma Yehudit – who advocate for Israel as a "Jewish democracy" from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River.

But the position Netanyahu espoused last week was more dramatic, and more radical, than those he has taken in the past – tantamount to indeed re-designating Israel as a "Jewish democracy" in which "the people's will" equates to the will of the Jews or the Zionists, excluding the Arabs or at least the non-Zionists. Thus he had won, Gantz had lost, and the Joint List was irrelevant.

In light of this, Blue and White MK Ofer Shelah accused Netanyahu on March 6 of issuing "a declaration of war on Jewish-democratic Israel." Shelach preferred not to note, however, that it was his party leader, Gantz, who had repeatedly drawn a distinction before the elections between the Zionist parties – apparently including the ultra-Orthodox, all of whom he said could theoretically be part of his coalition – and the non-Zionist Joint List, with whom he would have no truck.

The issue of the rights and legitimacy of the Arab electorate and its MKs is ultra-sensitive, foundational territory. The modern state was revived to protect the Jewish people in its historic homeland. By extension, its Jewish citizens must determine its future. Hence the huge controversy surrounding any reliance on Arab votes to advance legislation relating to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Hence the exclusion of Arab MKs from ultra-sensitive Knesset committees relating to the challenge posed by Iran. Hence the fact that no Israeli government has ever included a mainly Arab party in its ranks.

And hence the friction ratcheted up by Netanyahu in his comments last week with that other core principle: Israel as both a Jewish majority state and a democracy with equal rights for its non-Jewish minority.

How any of this will now play out is anybody's guess.

Netanyahu rebounded from the brink of oblivion in September's elections to restore Likud as the country's biggest party, but nonetheless failed for the third time to win an election outright, and lacks the votes he'd need to try to avert a corruption trial that is coming up very soon.

Gantz also failed for the third time to win an election outright, proving incapable of capitalizing on the fact that Netanyahu, since September, had been formally indicted and had broken a pledge not to seek Knesset immunity from prosecution.

Liberman, the architect of a year's political chaos and legislative paralysis – who prevented a Netanyahu coalition after last April's vote, and has tortured the electorate ever since – could still capriciously choose to rescue Netanyahu or help empower Gantz, but currently seems disinclined to do either while simultaneously insisting that he won't condemn us to a fourth election.

For now, Netanyahu seems under no threat from within Likud, even though his defeated internal challenger from December, Gideon Saar, has been proven correct in predicting that Netanyahu would not be able to muster the votes to win this election outright.

For now, Gantz seems to be holding his disparate Blue and White alliance together, even though its sole unifying purpose was to defeat Netanyahu, and even as Likud probes relentlessly for weak links who might defect.

And for now, President Reuven Rivlin's plaintive pleas for some kind of national unity remain largely unheeded. Indeed, with the coalition battleground shifted in part to a struggle over the legitimacy and relevance of MKs chosen by the Arab electorate, the very notion of Israel as any kind of unified entity, always a fragile construct, is now under the microscope. Placed there by a prime minister who, as of this writing, in a political reality both fluid and deadlocked, didn't quite lose the elections but didn't quite win them either. ■

Times of Israel / Timesofisrael.com

Blue and White looks to form minority government

RAOUL WOOTLIFF
JERUSALEM

Blue and White has reportedly told two MKs from the party's right-wing flank that they will have no place in the centrist alliance if they don't support a minority government in order to remove Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu from office and prevent a fourth election.

According to Channel 12 news, MKs Zvi Hauser and Yoaz Hendel, both hailing from the Telem faction within Blue and White, have been given an ultimatum: back the formation of a minority government relying on the outside support of the majority-Arab Joint List, or resign from the Knesset.

Though neither Netanyahu's Likud nor Blue and White mustered a majority of Knesset seats in the March 2 election, the prime minister has the backing of 58 MKs and his Likud is the largest party. But if Avigdor Liberman's Yisrael Beytenu and the Joint List of mainly Arab parties were to recommend to Israeli President Reuven Rivlin that Gantz form the new coalition, he would have 62 backers.

Even if the three-member Balad faction of the Joint List choose not to back Gantz, as happened in September, the Blue and White leader would still have 59 if Hauser and Hendel fall in line.

On Sunday, Telem faction chair and Blue and White No. 3 Moshe Ya'alon, along with party chair Benny Gantz, held a meeting in Tel Aviv in which they tried to persuade the rebel lawmakers to support a minority government, but the conversation reportedly turned heated and yelling could be heard from the other side of the door.

Earlier Sunday, the Blue and White leadership decided that the best path forward was to form a minority government, given that a unity coalition doesn't appear to be on the table and that another election may not even be possible due to the coronavirus outbreak, Channel 12 reported.

Accordingly, the party is preparing to launch a media blitz to combat Likud, which has blasted Blue and White for co-operating with "terror supporters" in the Joint List party.

The centrist alliance will reportedly seek to explain that in exchange for the support of the Joint List MKs, it will be agreeing to the same social-minded gestures to the Arab public that Likud has offered in the past. It will then work to pass a budget before welcoming any other interested parties, including Likud, to join the coalition, the report said.

Head of Blue and White party Benny Gantz holds a press conference at Kfar Maccabia on March 7. TOMER NEUBERG/FLASH90 PHOTO

Under pressure from Likud, Blue and White repeatedly said during the election campaign it would not seek to form a government with the support of the Joint List.

The final results gave the Likud party 36 seats to rival Blue and White's 33, leaving the right-wing bloc led by the premier at 58, three seats short of the majority required to form a government and continuing a year-long deadlock.

Meanwhile, on Monday, Central Elections Committee chairman Neal Hendel asked the Israel Police to open investigations into suspected voter fraud at three polling stations during last week's general election.

According to Hendel, the election body's own review process "pointed at irregularities" in polling stations in the southern town of Rahat, the central city of Lod and the northern community of Iksal, saying that "the police must open investigations into each of these cases." ■

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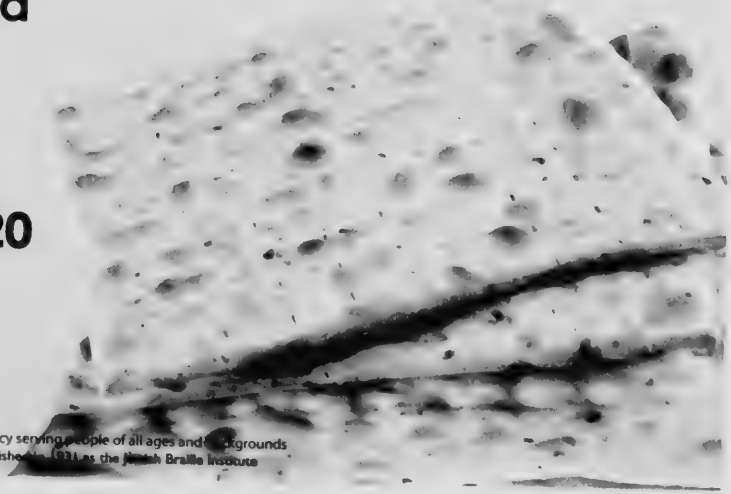

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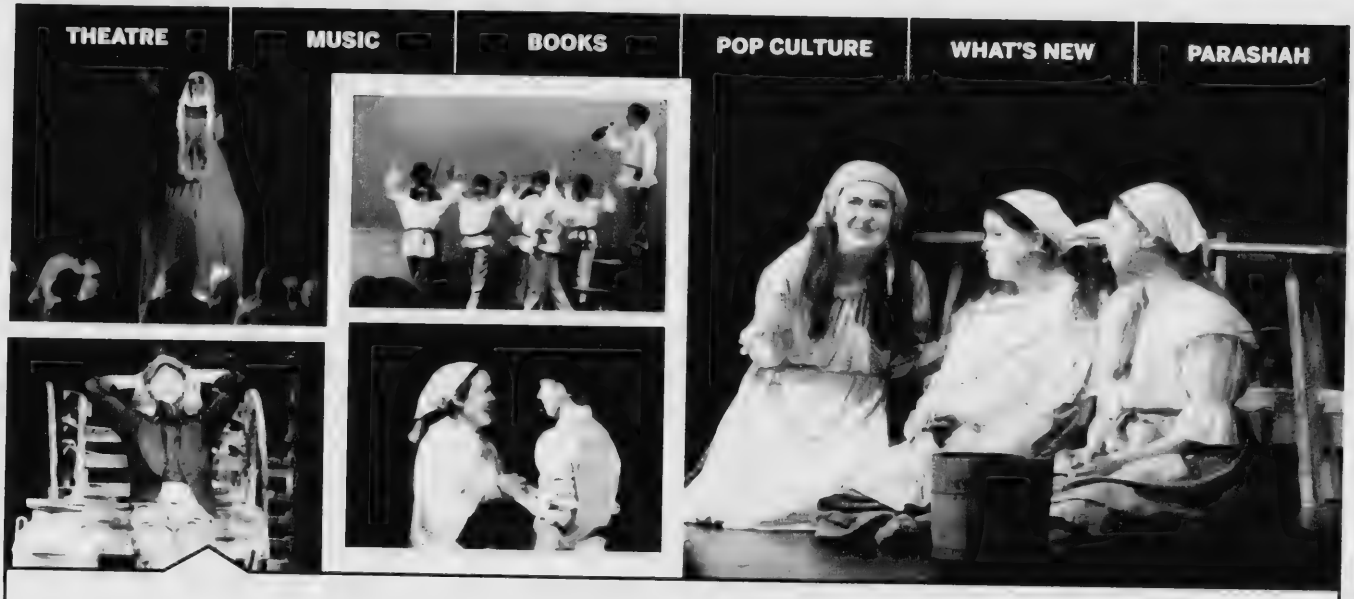


SENKA BOZIK PHOTOS

B.C. high school involves Jewish community for Fiddler on the Roof production

LAUREN KRAMER
PACIFIC CORRESPONDENT

Oak Bay High School, a public secondary school in Victoria, B.C., staged *Fiddler on the Roof* as its annual production last week, an idea that had come straight from the students themselves.

"Students let us know they enjoyed the music in the show and we thought it would be topical and enjoyable to stage this show," said Steve Price, musical theatre teacher at the school.

Of the 90 students involved in the production, only two are Jewish. Price said that when the decision was first made to stage *Fiddler* and the school's administration was consulted, they were determined to involve Victoria's Jewish community in the production. "We thought it would make little sense to produce this piece without giving students the best background possible," he said. As part of the preparations the school invited Rabbi Lynn Greenhough of Kolot Mayim Reform Temple to speak to the students last December.

"She laid out the historical relevance of the text and discussed the migration of Jews at the time, something the students had not previously understood. They'd heard about pogroms but didn't understand the forced migration of the Jewish people or the numbers involved," Price said. "She explained that hundreds of thousands of Jews were being forced to move on a regular basis after the first pogrom. Their communities were continually threatened and they never knew when their next move was going to be."

Rabbi Greenhough also assisted students with their accents for the show, described the significance of different religious garments and explained the concept of the matchmaker. As a result of the historical context she provided, Price said students were able to "play their parts in a more realistic manner. Now they can understand what the play means, and its subtleties."

Rabbi Greenhough said she was deeply impressed by the sincerity of the students' questions. "One of the young men asked, 'How did you pray?' I thought that was such a deep, thoughtful question, because he really wanted to bring that into his character in the play," she recalled.

"I was impressed with how open the students were. All 90 students in the play – backstage, front stage - wanted to bring their very best selves to do justice to this story, especially in the context of what's happening politically today, with incredible rises in numbers of anti-Semitic acts. I think the school chose *Fiddler on the Roof* quite deliberately and I give the school, the students and their teachers all the credit for not just treating this as a comedy or a play that everyone's familiar with, but by committing to do it justice. I imagine that the students that participated in the play have been changed by their participation, and that's a teacher's dream."

Mary Ann Watson, a parent of two boys at Oak Bay, said the school deserves a shout out "for not only staging *Fiddler on the Roof* for a public high school musical but for making it meaningful. Both my sons are working stage crew for this production. They are both very grateful to see Jewish content in a public school musical theatre production." ■

Israeli violinist has played with best-selling artists

Miri Ben-Ari MARIAJOSE PHOTO

RUTH SCHWEITZER
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Miri Ben-Ari is a classically trained violinist who's collaborated with Kanye West, Jay-Z, Alicia Keys, Wynton Marsalis, Maroon 5, Patti LaBelle, Janet Jackson, John Legend and many other best-selling artists.

Her collaborations have influenced her sound - a fusion of classical music, R&B, jazz, hip-hop and Afrobeat. "Young musicians don't understand how I do what I do on a violin. It's very important to have the classical foundation and knowledge. It gives you the skills to technically do whatever you would like to do," said Ben-Ari, who studied with violinist Isaac Stern.

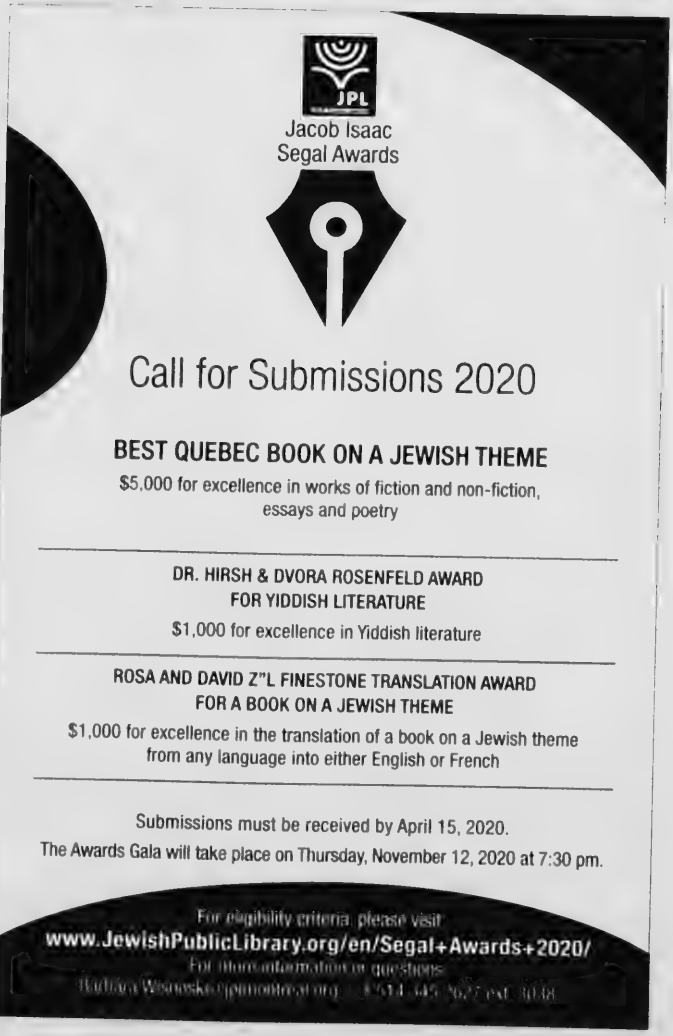
Ben-Ari is touring Ontario this month, with stops in Belleville, Markham, Brampton and Oakville. "I like to take my audience on a journey that is not limited to one style or one genre. It's a true musical experience that tells my story," she said about her multimedia show. On tour with Ben-Ari is Sadé Emoni, an R&B singer who appeared on the television talent competition, *American Idol*, when she was 15.

Ben-Ari's first professional violin was a gift from Stern. After she performed for him during a master class, on an inferior instrument, "he said, 'She really needs a good violin,'" Ben-Ari recalled. So he arranged to give her one through his foundation. "I still have this instrument and I've recorded with it many times," she said.

Born in Tel Aviv, Ben-Ari left Israel in the late 1990s after finishing her mandatory military service and enrolled in the jazz program at The New School in New York. She took on gigs to help pay her rent. She caught hip-hopper Jay-Z's eye when she appeared on a hip-hop and R&B music video show on the television network BET. He asked her to join him as a headliner at the 2001 edition of the annual summer concert presented by New York's hip-hop radio station, Hot 97.

She went on to create a hip-hop mix with a DJ, live at New York's legendary Apollo Theater. "I still thought I was playing jazz. Because for me, it was all just improvisation and grooving to a beat. I didn't even understand at the time the difference between the genres. I got into commercial music from that point," Ben-Ari said while on the phone from New Jersey, where she's based.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32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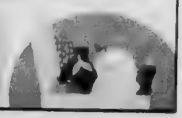


Jazz/classical fusion pianist up for instrumental Juno award

RUTH SCHWEITZER
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Ron Davis' third album in his Symphronica series, *SymphRONica UpfRONt*, has been nominated for a Juno award in the instrumental album of the year category.

Although a fusion of classical music and jazz, the album tends to lean towards the jazz side. All the musicians on the album, including Davis on piano, come from classical and jazz backgrounds.

Over the past two decades instrumental music has been marginalized in popular culture, and most music that's released today is vocal, Davis said. With the Symphronica series Davis is countering that trend.

UpfRONt, produced by Symphronica double bass player Mike Downes, is a collection of six original compositions by Davis, along with tunes by Sammy Lerner, Miles Davis and others.

The Miles Davis tune on *UpfRONt*, "So What," is an example of cool jazz. In connection with the song, Davis related a memory of his mother, Alice, a Holocaust survivor. "My mother, she would always ask me, 'How come you're not famous like Miles Davis? We have the same name,'" Davis said. "Honestly, she would always ask me that."

UpfRONt does include one vocal, "Nina," written by Paolo Conte and sung by Davis' wife Daniela Nardi. "I'm proud of how beautiful that track is. It's deeply emotional just like Daniela," Davis said.

Nardi – whose album *Espresso Manifesto* was co-produced by Davis – and Davis will be walking the red carpet at the 2020 Juno Awards ceremony in Saskatoon on March 15. "Getting the nomination does add some fuel into the engines of Symphronica progress," Davis said.

Since 2001, he's released 12 critically acclaimed albums, and he'll be up to No. 13 with the release in May of the fourth recording in his Symphronica series, *The Instrumental Music Liberation Front*.

"This new record is meant to be a shot across the bow of the music industry, to regain the place of instrumental music," he said. "With this record, I have more than ever embraced classical music because that's the other genre of music, along with jazz, that's been marginalized."

Davis' recordings are accessible, but he said accessibility isn't a strategy to attract listeners. "It's the way I hear music. It is entirely organic. It's not closed and brainy and very theoretical as some jazz can be."

He never forgets that music is entertainment, he said. "It's more than entertainment, but it is entertainment," Davis said, adding that many of the jazz greats, like Louis Armstrong and Dizzy Gillespie, were also entertainers.

Ron Davis at the piano.

> *This new record is meant to be a shot across the bow of the music industry, to regain the place of instrumental music.*

People who think they don't care for jazz often enjoy performances by Davis and his band. Some have told him, "You know I don't listen to jazz but that was great."

Davis is a classically trained musician who began playing jazz in the 1970s, before it was taught at universities and colleges. One of Davis' influences was his teacher, Darwyn Aitken, a jazz and classical player whose students included prominent Canadian jazz pianists like Joe Sealy and Nancy Walker.

"We developed our technique with Chopin and Debussy and we learned jazz theory, but when it came to jazz, he would just invite us to play what we were working on, give us suggestions or tips, maybe just show us a technique or two. He really fostered and nurtured jazz playing from the inside," Davis said.

He added that Aitken was ahead of his time, not putting barriers between jazz and classical music. "He was equal opportunity between jazz and classical and other music," Davis said.

"Time has caught up with that view and now there's more ecumenism about music. It's harder to find people who are snobbish about one particular type of music or genre."■

Davis' new album will be released at the 918 Bathurst Centre for Culture at 8 p.m. on May 23. For advance tickets ($20), visit bemusednetwork.com. Visit rondavismusic.com for more information.

Kertes returns to Hungary's dark period in latest novel

RON CSILLAG
rcsillag@thecjn.ca

It seems Toronto author Joseph Kertes can't stay away from the dark side.

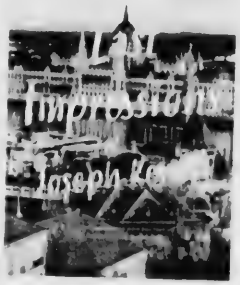
Much as he tried to avoid another back drop of mayhem, *Last Impressions* (Penguin Canada), Kertes's fifth novel for adults (he's written two books for children), is set against the Holocaust in Hungary. But this time, the story is leavened with some genuine light-heartedness and tenderness in contemporary Toronto.

Kertes started things off with laughs. His debut novel, *Winter Tulips*, won the Stephen Leacock Memorial Medal for Humour in 1989. His second book, *Boardwalk* (1998), was praised as "an interesting hybrid: part road novel, part unabashed romance."

Then came *Gratitude* (2009) and *The Afterlife of Stars* (2014), both closely based on his Jewish family's travails during the Nazi occupation of Hungary and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution.

After those books, "I didn't want to go back into that dark period," Kertes told *The CJN* about his new effort, "and yet, there I was. I guess I can't really shake it off."

Writing *Last Impressions* "was much more difficult than I thought it would be," but the author confesses to feeling "enormously better" after having completed the book. I think there is something really cathartic in doing this."



Again based on his family's experiences during the Second World War, the novel traces the trajectory of the war-scarred Zoltan Beck, a larger-than-life figure with an utter disregard for societal norms of manners and decorum, and his devoted but long-suffering sons, Ben and Frank.

The story alternates seamlessly between modern Toronto and the brutality of a Nazi-run labour camp in Transylvania, then part of Hungary, where "Zoli" and his charming older brother Bela stare death in the face daily. Kertes's father, Paul, who died in 2007, and Paul's brother, Bela, laboured in such a camp. The real-life Bela, who was just 23, never came home, and no one to this day knows his fate.

In its draft form, the book was "pure comedy," said Kertes, 68, whose family came to Canada after the revolution in Hungary in 1956. "But I decided I was unhappy with it, with the way it concluded. Because my own true feelings, and the feelings of others around my father, was deep sadness about his loss, I felt I wasn't fair to him. In order to do justice to him, and to the protagonists, I wanted to have this whole other subplot."

Despite that subplot, which Kertes called "dark and tragic," the author manages to weave a story of lost loves, heroic survival skills, deep father-son connections, and a whopper of a family secret.

Kertes's method seems simple: "I always begin with real people. The trajectory goes from there. I take enormous liberties, which is why I write fiction rather than non-fiction. This couldn't have been a memoir. I prefer the liberty of being able to take an adventure with these characters."

Among Zoltan's many quirks is a nugget of wisdom: achievement, ambition, success are overrated. If it's good enough, it's perfect. Given what he went through, that makes sense. The philosophy rings true for Kertes.

As the former dean of the School of Creative and Performing Arts at Humber College, Kertes encountered students who were "always striving for enormous goals. I kept telling writing students that although it looks wonderful to hold your book and see it on a shelf, it's actually not about that. It's actually about getting it down and that wonderful interior adventure of going through this world in your own mind and trying to make it better and make sense of it. The reward is in the doing of it."

Ultimately, Kertes strives for veracity, even in fiction. "One of the reasons I start with real people is that I really do want to know who they were and what made them be who they were," he said. "I really feel strongly that there's so much to learn and discover about other people. It's a wonderful journey to take." ■

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Fighting the three-headed dragon of anti-Semitism

MORDECHAI BEN-DAT
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

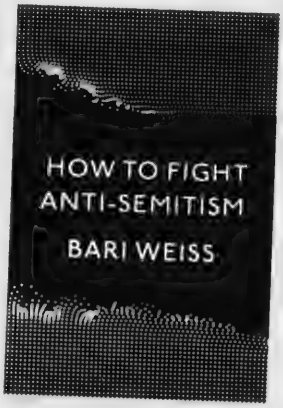
Bari Weiss was born near the mid-point of the 1980s. She writes that she had always considered herself "among the luckiest Jews in all of history." And she probably is, along with all her peers who were born some four decades after the end of the Second World War in the United States, a country that adheres to the rule of law, in a Jewish community which provided an ever-renewing canopy of inspiration and a family that believed that tomorrow must be better than today and who actually strived to make it so.

Weiss has epitomized that striving throughout her professional life. Currently a staff writer and editor for the opinion section of the *New York Times*, she has also been an op-ed and book review editor at the *Wall Street Journal* and a journalist at *Tablet*, the online magazine of Jewish politics and culture.

The genesis of this, her first book, was the slaughter of 11 worshippers on Oct. 27, 2018 in the Tree of Life synagogue in the Squirrel Hill neighbourhood of Pittsburgh, Pa. The craven murderer shouted, "Jews must die" as he fired deadly rounds into defenceless men and women. As a child of that neighbourhood, Weiss felt compelled to respond, to "wake up" the Jewish and wider community to the increasingly penetrating encroachment into the U.S. body politic of the deadly "disease of the mind" called anti-Semitism.

Weiss is worried that "deeper cultural and political forces surging on the right and the left are transforming (the United States), with profound implications for a group (the Jews) that constitutes less than two per cent of the population."

The primary focus of the book is the rise of the manifest hatred in the United States directed at Jews. She speaks directly to her co-religionists, but not only to them. "This book," Weiss writes, "is for anyone, Jew or gentile, who is concerned not with what is fashionable but with what is true. This book is for anyone, Jew or gentile, who loves freedom and seeks to protect it. It is for anyone, Jew or gentile, who cannot look away from what is brewing in this country and in the world and wants to do something to stop it."



How to Fight Anti-Semitism
By Bari Weiss
Crown, New York

How to Fight Anti-Semitism is a short book, with some 200 pages, but is not a quick read. It calls upon the conscience and weighs upon the heart. In six compact chapters, Weiss pens a powerful *cri de coeur*. The three chapters in which Weiss describes the "three-headed dragon" menacing America - anti-Semitism from the far-right, the far-left and radical Islam - form the core of the book.

Weiss has not written a comprehensive treatise on the subject. Nor did she attempt to. She recently told *The CJN* that if she were to rewrite the book now, she would add a "greater examination" of events in Brooklyn, namely the recent attacks by mostly young blacks against visibly obvious Jews. She also would have included her impressions of "the unbelievable solidarity that was exemplified by the British Jewish community" in uniting to prevent Jeremy Corbyn's party from forming the government.

Weiss has written a searing chronicle and analysis of recent violence and other threatening manifestations of hatred against Jews in America and in Europe. She wrote boldly and forcefully, calling out the dragon's dangerous fire from whichever direction it immolates the truth.

She criticizes American President Donald Trump for willingly flirting with anti-Semites on the far-right.

Weiss appears most pained, however, in depicting the malevolence aimed at Jews from the far left. Corbynism (the transformation of a major political party into a hub of Jew hatred) "is not confined to the U.K.," Weiss writes. "Right now in America, leftists who share Corbyn's worldview are building grassroots movements and establishing factions within the Democratic party that are actively hostile to Jewish power, to Israel, and ultimately to Jews."

Her pain is not phantom.

Just last month, Sen. Bernie Sanders, one of the Democratic party's candidate for the presidency, noisily refused to address the annual American Israel Public Affiars Committee (AIPAC) conference because of his stated concern that they provide a platform "for leaders who express bigotry and oppose basic Palestinian rights."

Sanders' accusation was, of course, a vile calumny against AIPAC and thus too against the Jews and non-Jews who attended the conference.

Much in the same manner that Trump panders to his voter base, Sanders does the same thing. His vilification of AIPAC was a shameless sop to his core voters. But far worse, he drips more anti-Israel - and ultimately anti-Semitic poison - into the minds of some of the young idealistic if uninformed voters who support him.

In the concluding chapter, Weiss shares her views on how to deal with the rising menace. This chapter is the lightning that illumines the darkened sky.

She offers a subjective, multi-pronged prescription for individual and collective action. Inspired some years ago by an essay written by Ze'ev Maghen, now a professor of Middle Eastern history at Bar Ilan University, Weiss adopts his approach to defeating the dragon: not to be defensive, but rather to be aggressively positive in embracing the Judaism that anti-Semites, with all their sinister deceptions and threats, aim to destroy. In effect she prescribes a life of Jewish and civic responsibility.

"Maghen's essay ... fundamentally reoriented my posture. It moved me from crouching to standing, from defense to offense, from doubt to confidence, from shame to pride," she writes. "There has not been a single moment in Jewish history in which there weren't anti-Semites determined to eradicate Judaism and the Jews. But the Jews did not sustain their magnificent civilization because they were anti-anti-Semites. They sustained it because they knew who they were and why they were. They were lit up not by fires from without but by fires in their souls.

"Likewise, we fight by waging an affirmative battle for who we are, by entering the fray for our values, for our ideas, for our ancestors, for our families, for our communities, for the generations that will come after us."

Bari Weiss has written a compelling book. Especially heartening is the fact that she is an inspiring avatar of the younger generation now holding high the torch and joining her elders in the long march of the eternal Jewish people. ■

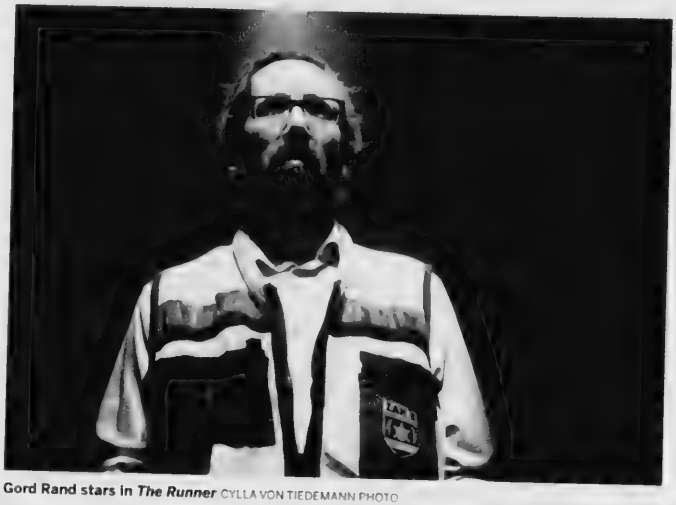
A gripping tale about split-second decisions

DOROTHY LICHTBLAU
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

The Runner, now playing at Toronto's Tarragon Theatre until March 29, is stark and emotionally gripping. From the beginning the audience is visually and aurally swept onto a journey composed of stretches of foggy darkness, bright patches and many ironies.

When the stage light first comes up its beam reveals a scruffy young man (Gord Rand) running on a treadmill, an obvious but brilliant symbol of his plight. He is jogging; trying to move forward but he can't. Quickly the audience discovers that this fellow is an Orthodox, Israeli Jew named Jacob, who volunteers for ZAKA, an organization dedicated to gathering the remains of Israeli soldiers so that they may receive a Jewish burial. While striving forward and falling back, Jacob reveals that minutes ago he went through an encounter that has blasted him to foreign territory within his own domain.

He is a caring man, dedicated to honouring bodies and souls, and is also a son who dutifully supports his mother. However, on this day he is confronted by the possibility that doing good to your friends and turning your back on your enemies is much too simple a creed to live by.



Gord Rand stars in *The Runner* CYLLA VON TIEDEMANN PHOTO

Today as he strives to honour Israeli soldiers, who were attacked by a young Palestinian girl, he is stymied. He begins to question his own integrity, more flawed than his friends and co-workers might suspect. He has made a promise that may mark him a traitor. He is in pain. He is conflicted. In this moment he is not certain to whom to cry out for help.

Though to some degree *The Runner* approaches difficult questions too simplistically, it is a worthwhile theatrical journey. Rand's performance is powerful and sensitive. Director Daniel Brooks has wrought a significant and provocative theatrical experience.

This is not the first time that *The Runner* has been presented to audiences in Toronto. The show premiered at the Theatre Passe Muraille in 2018. I'm glad it is back in town. ■

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Pop Culture

Hunters isn't bad for Jews – it's just dumb

Michael Fraiman

Al Pacino, right, sharpens his Yiddish accent in *Hunters*. CHRISTOPHER SAUNDERS PHOTO

The opening credits to *Hunters*, the new Amazon Prime Video series that debuted late February, portray a chess board lined with figurines of the main characters staring each other down. Chess is a central theme of the show. It appears literally, in people's homes, and also metaphorically, as underground Nazis and secret Nazi hunters vie to stay at least one step ahead of each other in a gritty 1970s New York.

In one early scene, chess even figures grotesquely: in a flashback to Auschwitz, Nazi guards use Jews to play human-sized games of chess. Sobbing prisoners would be murdered when they were removed from the board. It's a ludicrous scene, and when I watched it, I couldn't help but roll my eyes.

That reaction has not been universal. The Auschwitz Memorial publicly condemned the show on Twitter, writing, "Auschwitz was full of horrible pain and suffering documented in the accounts of survivors. Inventing a fake game of human chess for *Hunters* is not only dangerous foolishness & caricature. It also welcomes future deniers. We honour the victims by preserving factual accuracy."

It's a fair point, but also disregards the fundamental fact that *Hunters* is a uniquely stupid show.

I don't even mean that as an insult. I mean *Hunters* is so playfully, self-consciously, bombastically stupid that no one could possibly confuse it with real life, and no Holocaust denier could plausibly leverage it as proof without being laughed out of whatever smelly basement they've gathered in.

If anything, *Hunters* faces the opposite problem. It's so absurd it has to emphasize – all but screaming at the audience – when it portrays things that actually happened.

To wit: at one point mid-season, the show cuts to a fake commercial for Huntsville, Ala., where secret Nazis are gleefully pretending to be hillbillies. It's a goofy representation of the hideousness of Operation Paperclip, a real-life U.S. plan to snag Nazi scientists away from Soviet influence in the chaotic aftermath of the Second World War. After inventing rockets that killed thousands during the war, those same Germans helped America win the Space Race.

"Come to Huntsville, Alabama," the pseudo-commercial's narrator declares, "home to the Space and Rocket Center, staffed by Nazi scientists smuggled here by your government. Oh yeah – it really happened!"

The subtext: most everything else in this show is made-up nonsense. Fun nonsense, sure, but definitely nonsense.

The show's lunacy raises the question of whether it's even any good. Honestly, that is a difficult question. *Hunters* tries to be everything to everyone: pulpy revenge porn ripped from Quentin Tarantino's playbook; an homage to 1970s ass-kicking stereotypes (kung fu, blaxploitation, etc.); a sombre reflection on the gritty realities of the Shoah; a Cold War spy thriller; a screwball comedy starring Carol Kane and Saul Rubinek as a delightful kvetching couple who also happen to be explosives experts; a vehicle for Al Pacino (honorary Jew in my books) to thicken his Yiddish accent as the leader of the underground Nazi hunters; a strikingly Semitic adaptation of *Revenge of the Nerds*; a comic-book superhero story; a parable debating the moral virtues of ethical actions in the face of pure evil; and on, and on, and on.

In short: the show is *a lot*. It also feels extremely long – the pilot alone is 90 minutes, and every subsequent episode is a full hour – which is dizzying. But it is also easily Amazon's most Jewish show, a formidable title for a streaming net work that brought us *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* and *Transparent*.

Watch it for entertainment if you're curious. Just don't watch it for accuracy. And not even historical accuracy: that chess game during the opening credits? It's not even really a chess game. On both sides, Jews and Nazis approach each other head-to-head on the chessboard, shifting one space forward at a time. That's not how chess is played. That's just a mindlessly fun brawl. ■

Hip-hop violinist takes audiences on a musical journey

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27

Dubbed "the hip-hop violinist" by West, she won a Grammy Award for best rap song in 2005, as one of the co-writers of West's single "Jesus Walks." On her 2005 album, *The Hip-Hop Violinist*, Ben-Ari collaborated with platinum-selling rappers like West, Lil Wayne and Pitbull, among others.

Her 2009 single "Symphony of Brotherhood," featuring the "I Have a Dream" speech by Martin Luther King Jr., was the first instrumental single to be charted in Billboard's R&B and hip-hop categories.

Composed with her musician brother, Ohad Ben-Ari, "Symphony of Brotherhood," took her around the world, Miri Ben-Ari said. She's performed it for former Israeli president, Shimon Peres, for the Obamas at the White House – where former first lady Michelle Obama honoured Ben-Ari with a Remarkable Woman Award and at the United Nations.

Ben-Ari's recent releases include an award-winning single she recorded with the Tanzanian musician Diamond Platnumz. The song, "Baila," won for the best collaboration at the 2019 African Entertainment Awards, USA.

The granddaughter of Holocaust survivors, Ben-Ari is the co-founder of the Gedenk ("remember" in Yiddish) Movement, a foundation that aims to promote tolerance and increase Holocaust awareness among youth through music, art and dance. ■

Ben-Ari is performing on March 10 at the Empire Theatre in Belleville; March 12 at the Flato Markham Theatre in Markham; March 13 at the Rose Theatre in Brampton and March 14 at the Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts. For tickets, visit miribenari.com/blog or the theatres' websites.

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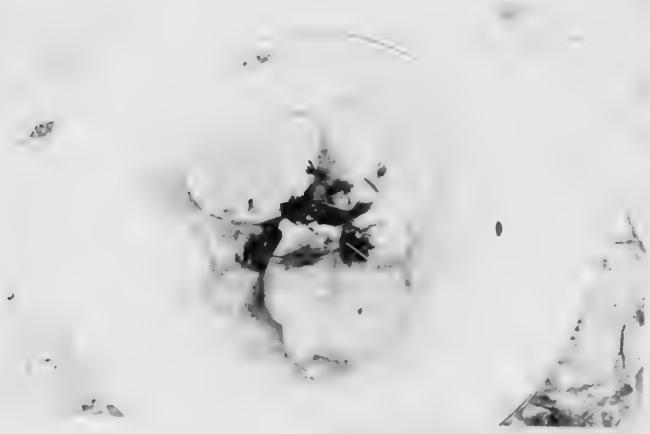


MIRIAM AMDUR
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Passover, in my mom's Ukrainian-Jewish household, always included matzah meal pancakes. More specifically, they were added to soup because the matzah balls that we have come to know in Canada were unknown to her.

My mom and I decided to explore this recipe again with Passover quickly approaching and her childhood cravings for the fare coming with it. The first step was making our traditional chicken soup and then whipping together the matzah meal pancakes. They're quick to prepare and are a unique addition to Passover dinner. ■

Matzah Meal Pancakes

- 3 eggs
- 175 ml (¾ cup) cold water
- 5 ml (1 tsp) salt
- 125 ml (½ cup) matzah meal
- Vegetable oil for frying

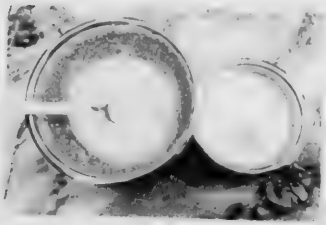
To make the pancakes, use one large mixing bowl and one smaller bowl to separate the eggs. Split the egg whites into the smaller bowl. Beat the egg whites until light and fluffy.

Add water, salt and matzo meal to the egg yolks. Beat well ensuring the mixture is still thick and then let stand for 5 minutes. Combine the egg whites into the mixture with a spoon.

Coat a large pan with oil.

Using a large spoon, scoop 50 ml (¼ cup) of batter for each pancake and drop it into the oil. Fry the pancake until it is a light brown on one side and then flip.

Once the pancakes are ready add them to chicken soup. Alternatively, use them as a side to a meat dish.



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$20 per litre (serves 4)

Matzah Balls
$2.50 per piece

Sweet Gefilte Fish with Beet Horseradish
$4 per 4oz portion

Salt and Pepper Gefilte Fish
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$4 per 4oz portion

Chopped Liver Paté
with Fried Onion and Matzah Crackers
$18 per 1lb + 8 pieces cracker (Serves 8)

SALADS

Creamy Hawaiian Slaw
Fine Shredded Red and Green Cabbage, Carrots, Pineapple, Mango and Apple Cider Dressing *$7 per portion*

Mixed Green Salad
with Orange, Grapefruit, Mandarin Segments, Sweet Pickled Heirloom Carrots, Honey Berry Dressing
$6 per portion

Baby Spinach Salad
With Roasted Red and Golden Beets, Balsamic Vinaigrette
$6 per portion

SIDES/STARCH
(average 4oz per portion)

Herb Garlic Crisp Potato
$4 per portion

Brown Sugar Honey Roasted Sweet Potato
$4 per portion

Potato Kugel
$35 per pan (Serves 9)

Apple Kugel
$38 per pan (Serves 9)

Herb Sautéed Mixed Vegetables
$4 per portion

Grilled Vegetable Bundles
$5 per portion

MAINS

Matzah Breaded Chicken Roulade
Stuffed with Spinach, Pimento, Caramelized Onion Marmalade Served with Au Jus
$24 per portion

Pan Seared Chicken Supreme
Served with Mango Peach Salsa and Au Jus
$22 per portion

Citrus Glazed Salmon
Served with Citrus Pomegranate Salsa
$18 per 8 oz portion

Montreal Spiced Braised Brisket
Topped with Crispy Onion Served with Au Jus
$45 per pound cooked weight

Stuffed Turkey Breast
with Cranberry, Apricot, Matzah, Herbs Served with Turkey Cranberry Jus
$24 per 2x4oz portion

ADDITIONAL

Chicken Fingers
with Ketchup and Plum Sauce
$30 per dozen

Meatballs
with BBQ Sweet and Sour Sauce
$30 per dozen

Charoset
$15 per 500 ml

Seder Plate
$20 per plate

Red Beet Horseradish
$7.50 per 250 ml

DESSERT

Frozen Lemon Cake
$55 per cake (Serves 12)

Flourless Chocolate Cake
$55 per cake (Serves 12)

Chocolate Biscotti
$24 per dozen

Dried Fruit, Apricot and Cranberry Biscotti
$24 per dozen

Salted Caramel Matzah Crunch
$24 per dozen

Our Seder Set Menu

Seder Plate
Chicken Noodle Matzah Ball Soup
Baby Spinach Salad with Roasted Red and Golden Beets, Balsamic Vinaigrette
Pan Seared Chicken Supreme Served with Mango Peach Salsa with Au Jus
Herb Garlic Crisp Potato
Sautéed Mixed Vegetables

$40/pp, Minimum 10 Servings

All Orders Must be Received by
Monday, March 30

Call 416.901.5044
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SPONSORED CONTENT

F+B Kosher: Your catering partner for a delicious and stress-free Passover

F+B Kosher is offering a 2020 Passover menu that takes traditional dishes and elevates them to perfection.

"Our focus for this menu isn't on modernity or innovation, but rather on perfecting the traditional approach to Passover food," said owners Cary Silber and David Silber (formerly of Applause Catering). "We have mastered the taste and presentation of the Passover dishes and have tailored our serving sizes to best match the audience at a seder."

F+B Kosher can cater an entire seder or augment home cooking with à la carte selections. Customers can also stock up on their favourite items for when they're too busy to cook during the week.

The company's 2020 Passover menu has been revamped from previous years to offer what it believes is the answer to the most important Passover question: What should I serve at the seder this year?

"We're offering our top rated selections that our clients have asked for. Whether it's the chicken soup or sweet potato kugel, every dish is crafted with passion and devotion. From the bordelaise braised short rib to the crunchy gremolata branzino bake, our dishes are sure to dazzle and impress."

Passover is a time to come together, to celebrate and to commemorate our ancestors. F+B Kosher has taken these core characteristics and embedded them within its Passover menu, hoping their dishes allow for celebration and reminders of the importance of the holiday.

F+B Kosher says it always strives to create menus that bring people together and create long-lasting memories and experiences. "We're more than just a catering company, we're a family-run local business serving Toronto's Jewish community."

F+B Kosher is a fixture in Toronto's kosher catering industry, executing multi-scale functions for Toronto's local residents and guests from around the world. It delivers outstanding contemporary kosher cuisine to the discerning palates of Toronto's kosher clientele. F+B Kosher is a brand exemplified by quality, integrity, creativity, value and experience.

F+B Kosher operates under the strict supervision of the Kashruth Council of Canada (commonly known by its COR heksher) and works seamlessly with clients, venues, event planners and other key stakeholders to create customized menus that deliver both unforgettable food and flawless execution.

F+B Kosher operates its state of the art kosher kitchen out of Beth Sholom Synagogue where it is the exclusive in-house caterer and an integral part of the shul's community. F+B Kosher is also a preferred catering partner at Adath Israel, Beth David, Beth Tikvah and the Village Shul, as well as other synagogues, venues and hotels in the Greater Toronto Area.

"We'd like to wish everyone *hag sameach*, and we hope that our Passover menu will help make this year's celebrations momentous and memorable." ■

To place an order from F+B Kosher's Passover menu, please email info@fbkosher.com, or call 416-900-0918.

F + B KØSHER

Passover Menu 2020

PICKUP LOCATION
Beth Sholom Synagogue
1445 Eglinton Ave W M6C 2E6
Wednesday April 8th, 9:30 AM - 2 PM
Order Deadline: March 23rd, 12:00 PM

STARTERS
Sweet & Savory Gefilte Fish With Beet Horseradish
Chopped Liver
Caramelized Orange + Toasted Cinnamon Tzimmes

SOUPS
Traditional Chicken Soup
Matzah Ball
Matzah Ball Vegetable Soup

SALAD: SERVED IN 9"x12" CONTAINER
Early Spring Salad
Caesar Salad

POULTRY ENTRÉE - select sauce below
BBQ Chicken
Stuffed Chicken Supreme
Chicken Fingers
Ketchup
Honey

FISH ENTRÉE
Honey Almond Crusted Salmon
Crunchy Gremolata Branzino Bake

BEEF ENTRÉE - select sauce below
Bordelaise Braised Short Rib
Dijon Montreal Spiced Brisket
Natural Jus
Chimichurri
Homemade BBQ Sauce

VEGETARIAN/VEGAN ENTRÉE
Stuffed Eggplant Caponata Roasted Cauliflower Steak
Vegan Mediterranean Cabbage Rolls

HOT SIDE DISHES: 9"X12" PAN - serves 8-10 people
Mini Red Quinoa Roasted Potato + Brussels Sprouts
Maple Braised Parsnip + Heirloom Carrots
Early Spring Vegetable Sauté
Potato Kugel
Sweet Potato Kugel
Apple Cinnamon Butternut Squash

COLD SIDE DISHES - serves 6-8 people
Cucumber Salad
Matbucha
Spicy Carrot Salad
Charoset

DESSERT SELECTION
Frozen Lemon Cake
Flourless Chocolate Cake
Apple Pie
Individual Mousse Dome
Individual Lemon Meringue Mousse Tower
Chocolate Date Coconut Truffle
Coconut Macaroons

INDIVIDUAL SEDER PLATE

View Menu With Pricing: **www.fbkosher.com**

Please call or email your order: info@fbkosher.com | 416-900-0918

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750 g
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selected varieties
3.98

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2.28

YEHUDA or MANISCHEWITZ MATZO
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Parashah

Ki Tisa | Exodus 30:11-34:35

Joshua Schwartz says when our tablets are shattered, it's time to carve them again
Rabbi Avram Rothman reflects on a test of life that cuts across the generations
Rachael Turkienicz considers the place of art and artists in Jewish history

Joshua Schwartz

"The Lord said to Moses: 'Carve for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and I will inscribe upon the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you shattered'" (Exodus 34:1). At first glance, God's instruction to Moses seems to be a generous granting of a second chance. But in the Talmud, the rabbis notice a hidden meaning tucked away in the verse's last Hebrew words, which they reinterpret as God commending Moses on breaking them! How could God congratulate Moses for such a daring and controversial act?

Reish Lakish, in the teaching mentioned above, justifies this radical reading, saying, "Sometimes, the apparent negation of Torah is its continued existence." This tradition insists that Moses' breaking of the first tablets was more than just agitprop theatre. Their shattering was not merely a spectacle to gain the rebellious people's attention. Rather, Moses was actually breaking the Torah, and its substance, in order to save it.

To this perspective, Moses' daring act was not merely a singular moment, but set a precedent. Rashi, in his commentary on this talmudic passage, writes that this applies today: "For example, one who withdraws from learning Torah to escort the deceased and for ushering in the bride, this is the foundation of Torah."

If one were to do the putatively frum thing and commit solely to learning while the world passes by, this is not truly fulfilment of the Torah. We learn Torah so that it can be enacted. As the Talmud states in Tractate Kiddushin, "Study is great because it leads to action." True *frumkeit* is committing to the vitality of the Torah as a living document that needs our active engagement. It is not to be passively received, but loved and cherished. Sometimes, like anything we love, it hurts, and sometimes we have to struggle.

Our tablets may shatter, but we will be asked to carve them again. *Yasher koach.* ■

Joshua Schwartz is the spiritual leader of Beth Lida Forest Hill Synagogue.

Rabbi Avram Rothman

When the Torah teaches about Moses receiving the Ten Commandments, it says that they were written by the finger of God. No further details are provided. Later, just prior to Moses smashing them, the Torah reveals more: they were readable from both sides, even though the letters penetrated the width of the stone. The Torah describes them: "The inscription was God's script, engraved on the tablets."

The logical location to describe the unique nature of the tablets was the moment when they were first given, rather than when they were about to be broken. The Torah does the reverse. Why?

Perhaps the Torah is teaching us a lesson that not only applies here, but also to life in general.

Whenever we possess something for a long time, we fail to appreciate what we have. It is only when one is on the verge of losing what he possesses that he begins to appreciate it.

When we are close to people and we think that they will always be around, we take them for granted. When we are faced with losing somebody, and we know that our time with them is limited, then we realize the preciousness of what we have.

This is a lesson that has countless examples throughout our lives. One of the biggest tests of life is to appreciate a situation while we are still experiencing it. Life is too fleeting, because we are overwhelmed by the little bumps in the road. We do not have the time and peace of mind to appreciate what we have.

This is the test of life that cuts across generations. We take our aging parents for granted, as we do with our children. We take our spouses for granted, as we do with our friends.

This is the lesson that the Torah is teaching us. We only notice the beauty of the tablets when we are about to lose them. The challenge is to appreciate what we have while we still have it. ■

Rabbi Avram Rothman is the senior rabbi of the Aish Thornhill Community Shul in Toronto.

Rachael Turkienicz

This week's Torah portion, Ki Tisa, contains the name of the first Jewish visual artist: Bezalel ben Uri. Within his name is the definition of the artist, as Judaism teaches us that names define a person's essence.

Bezalel means "in the shadow of God." It is the place where art thrives and the place of its inspiration. The essence of the artist dwells most comfortably in the shadows, far from the black and white of everyday life. But these shadows are created with God as the source, as God blocks the light, generating the shadow. It is the place of nuance and meaning, the place where definition blurs – the place of art.

Interestingly, Bezalel is the son of Uri, whose name means "my light." Although the artist is most comfortable in the shade, the purpose of art is to bring light. Art is another voice of interpretation, and Jewish interpretation is meant to add to our understanding, our light.

Yet Bezalel's name continues, referencing his grandfather Hur. The Talmud says Hur was the son of Miriam and Caleb. Miriam, Moses' sister, was the woman who expressed her worship of God in music and dance at the Red Sea. She was the first musical artist of our text.

Her husband, Caleb, was the spy who partnered with Joshua before entering Israel, and they were the only spies to tell the truth about the land. They brought back examples of plentitude (think of the famous image of two men carrying huge clusters of grapes on poles) and begged the Israelites to change their perspective. Caleb was fiercely connected to what he believed to be the truth. He was the great-grandfather of Bezalel, the artist.

There is nothing superfluous in Torah. Even the names give us all we need in understanding that while art is the window forward into the nuances of meaning, the artist is the window backward into the source. ■

Rachael Turkienicz is the executive director of Rachael's Centre in Toronto (rachaelscentre.com).

Social Scene

Teddy Lubimzev, Rabbi Mordechai Rothman, Chai Lifeline national director, Carole and Sen. Jerry Grafstein, hosts

Moshe Ronen, World Jewish Congress

Sandy Shorser and Craig Fried, director of development

Chai Lifeline Young Professionals Parlour Meeting

TORONTO

Over 30 young professionals attended a special evening to hear about Chai Lifeline's work in the community and how they can get involved with the cause. Special guest speaker for the night was Moshe Ronen, vice-president of the World Jewish Congress. ■

Barry Serebrenikov, Meyer Elharar and David Seni

Event co-chair Avi Sugar and Olga Samsonova

MPP Roman Baber, Sen. Jerry Grafstein and Shoshana Pasternak

Event co-chair Moshe Grunfeld and Barry Serebrenikov

Dave Diamond (Chai Lifeline Board), Daniel Diamond and Alex Diamond

Jen Gelberger, Heidi Czutrin and Tamar Silverbrook

David Elharar and Joe Reichmann

Marc Weisman and Sen. Jerry Grafstein

What's New

MARCH 12 - 19

by Lila Sarick

Thursday, March 12

INTIMACY AFTER CANCER
Dr. Lianne Trachtenberg discusses "Rebuilding Body Image and Intimacy After Cancer," 7 p.m., Aish Thornhill Community Shul, 949 Clark Ave. W. Suggested donation, $18. To register: 416-633-5100.

PILATES FOR BEGINNERS
Tammy Lindover teaches a four-session class of pilates for beginners, 11 a.m., Beth Tikvah. $60 for four classes. RSVP: 416-221-3433.

SODASTREAM TALK
Rena Nickerson, Canadian manager of SodaStream, speaks at Congregation Habonim, 2 p.m.

Friday, March 13

CANTORIAL CELEBRATION
Hazzan Tibor Kovari and cantorial students perform a musical Kabbalat Shabbat, 6 p.m. On March 14, **Marsha Edelman** gives a sermon during services on "How the Ba'al Shem Tov Influenced Congregational Singing." The weekend celebrations conclude with a concert on March 15 at 7:30 p.m. All events to be held at Beth Tikvah.

Sunday, March 15

JEWISH IN JAMAICA
Willy Lindo discusses "Growing Up Jewish in Jamaica," 10 a.m., Beth Emeth. $5. Register at 416-633-3838.

YOUNG HEROES
Learn about Jewish heroes from the Torah through crafts and games, 12:45 p.m., Chabad of Markham. Must register at chabadmarkham.org/youngheroes.

Deadline:
The deadline for the March 26 paper is March 16. All deadlines are at noon.
Phone: 416-391-1836 ext. 269;
email: **whatsnewcjn@gmail.com**.

Lunching for a good cause

Members of the New Horizons Day Centre - Toronto Hungarian Jewish Heritage Fund - recently hosted a luncheon. Some of the funds raised were donated to programs at Baycrest for Holocaust survivors. From left, Toronto Coun. James Pasternak, Joanne Gittens, Baycrest Foundation; Janice Benatar, UJA Federation of Greater Toronto; and Andy Winter of New Horizons.

JEWISH STORYTELLING GUILD
Open mic for tellers and listeners of traditional and personal Jewish stories, 7:30 p.m., Congregation Habonim, 5 Glen Park Ave. $5 or pay what you can. Details: jewishstorytelling@gmail.com or 416-633-7765.

PRE-PASSOVER CONCERT
The clergy and Temple Sinai Ensemble Choir perform a pre-Passover concert, 1:30 p.m., Terraces of Baycrest, 55 Ameer Ave.

Monday, March 16

MITZVAH KNITTERS
The Mitzvah Knitters meet at Beth Tikvah, 1-3 p.m. Yarn, needles and patterns supplied. Details: mitzvahknitters@gmail.com

Tuesday, March 17

MORNING STUDY GROUPS
- **Frank Dimant** is the guest speaker at a Women of Adath study group breakfast at 9:30 a.m. $10 for non-members. Info: **Marjorie**, 416-780-9156.
- **Michael Rubin** discusses "Social responsibility," 10:30 a.m., Beth David.

TUESDAYS WITH LARRY
Beth Tikvah shows the film *My First Wedding*, 1:30 p.m., $5. Each film includes an introduction and commentary by **Larry Anklewicz**.

THE FOUR SONS
The film *The Four Sons and All Their Sons – A Passover Tale* will be shown at Beth David, 7:30 p.m. Members free, non-members $5.

Wed., March 18

SCOTCH TASTING
Chabad of Markham holds a scotch and food pairing experience. Must RSVP at chabadmarkham.org/scotch.

HAGGADAH NIGHT
Hear 10-minute insights into the Haggadah, with **Ezer Diena** and rabbis **Sammy Bergman, Alex Hecht** and **Mordechai Torczyner,** 8 p.m., Shaarei Shomayim.

BIBLICAL JERUSALEM
David Lipovitch discusses "The Archeological Story of Biblical Jerusalem," 7:30 p.m., Darchei Noam.

TALMUD AND TANAKH STUDY
Aaron Nussbaum resumes his Talmud class, starting with Tractate Sanhedrin, 9:15 a.m., Beth Emeth. Tanakh class, studying the Book of Samuel II, resumes March 19, 9:30 a.m. at Beth David.

Thursday, March 19

THE PROGRESSIVE TALMUD
Rabbi Jordan Shaner discusses "Environmentalism and the Value of Creation," 7:30 p.m., Temple Sinai.

Et Cetera

CANCER SUPPORT
Cancer support for Jewish women, including social programs, educational events and resources can be found at the L'Chaim Cancer Support Group for Jewish Women. Info: 416-630-0203, or lchaim@ncjwctoronto.org.

REENA'S SOCIAL CLUB
A social club for individuals with autism and developmental disabilities meets Thursdays, 6:30-8:30 p.m., at Beth Sholom Synagogue. $10. RSVP to awindman@reena.org.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

SPEED DATING
Na'amat Canada Toronto holds a speed dating event for singles in their mid-20s to mid-30s, April 2, 7 p.m., 272 Codsell Ave. $36. Must register by March 19. Email: club.ruach@naamat.com.

SPRING LECTURE SERIES
Registration open for Temple Emanu-El's spring lecture series. April 6, **Mike Daley** on "Folk Music in 1960s Yorkville"; April 20, **Aurel Braun** on "Assessing the Middle East"; April 27, **Arne Kislenko** on "Contemporary Intelligence/ National Security Issues"; May 4, **Dr. David Alter** on "Is Sitting the New Smoking?"; May 11, **Robert Harris** on "How Jazz Changed the World." $50 for the series/ $15 per lecture. Info: 416-449-3880.

For Seniors

- **Bernard Betel Centre**, 416-225-2112. March 15, the film *A Letter to Three Wives* is shown, 1 p.m., free; March 17, lecture on "The Story of the Stolen Yemenite Children," 10 a.m., $4.25/$8.50; March 19, wellness lecture on "Spices and Their Health Benefits," 1:30 p.m., free. March 19, pianist **Victoria Kogan** and violinist **Atis Bankas** present *Beethoven 250*, 7 p.m., $10/$15.
- **Holy Blossom**. March 16, **Rabbi Yael Splansky** discusses "Are You a Purim Jew or a Pesach Jew?" Program includes exercise and lunch, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., $3/$5.
- **Association of Jewish Seniors.** March 19, Celebrating Nutrition Month, with diabetes education and registered dietitians, 9:30 a.m., Shaarei Shomayim. Register at 647-340-7961.
- **B'nai Brith Seniors.** Monday to Friday, lunch and a recreational program are offered. Call 416-633-6224 ext. 134 to register.
- **Earl Bales Seniors Club.** Contact **Valerie**, 416-395-7881.

Prosserman JCC

Donald Gales Family Pavilion on the Sherman Campus, 4588 Bathurst St., 416-638-1881 ext. 4020; prossermanjcc.com.

- Sign up for the Birthright JCC Fitness Experience, for people 21-26, at israelforfree.com.
- Bridge for beginners and intermediates starts March 26, 10 a.m. Learn to play canasta, starts March 12, 1:15 p.m.
- **Elana Horwich**, author of *Meal and a Spiel: How to Be a Badass in the Kitchen*, does a cooking demonstration, Lipa Green Centre, March 22, 10:30 a.m. $20.

Miles Nadal JCC

750 Spadina Ave., 416-924-6211, mnjcc.org.

- Toronto Jewish Film Society presents *The Gender Lady: The Fabulous Dr. May Cohen*, March 15, 3 p.m. Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema, 506 Bloor St. W., Q-and-A with **Dr. May Cohen** and filmmakers **Barb Lent** and **Cheryl Levitt**. $12.50.
- LGBTQ at the JCC. Games night at Snakes and Lattes, 600 Bloor St. W., March 17, 6 p.m. Details: CaraG@mnjcc.org.
- Book launch for **Rabbi Denise Handlarski**'s *The A-Z of Intermarriage*, March 23, 7 p.m.
- *25 Years of Strings: A Gretchen Paxson Abberger Tribute Concert*, April 1, 7 p.m. $25.
- DIY Haggadah Jam: design your own haggadah, March 29, 2 p.m.
- Register now for Hebrew and Yiddish classes, which start the week of April 20, ext. 386. Register for children's and adult pottery classes, ext. 606; Sign up for adult ukulele, folk choir, string ensemble and klezmer ensemble, ext. 250.
- Five Weeks in Paris: Opera Appreciation with **Iain Scott**, Mondays, March 23-April 27, 1:30-3:30 p.m.
- ASL 2: Thursdays, April 23-June 18. Ext. 356 or rachelL@mnjcc.org.
- Strength of Self, alternating Mondays, 11 a.m. A program for women who have experienced abuse. Call ext. 147.
- Shabbat Song Circle, Fridays at 10:30 a.m., for children up to age four with an adult. Ext. 390.
- **Seniors Arts and Culture**, ext. 155, lisar@mnjcc.org. Celebrate Shabbat in song with **Cantor Ben Sharpe** and **Jaclyn Klimitz**, March 27, 12:30 p.m. Enjoy a kosher lunch and welcome Shabbat. Free. Register at ext. 0.
- **Seniors Fitness**, ext. 521. Start Here, a free community wellness integration program designed to provide peer support, community engagement and learning and recovery opportunities. Agency referral required. Call ext. 574.
- Michael Bernstein Chapel holds services Thursdays at 7:15 a.m. and Sundays at 8 a.m. Info: **Coleman**, 416-968-0200.

Schwartz/Reisman Centre

Joseph and Wolf Lebovic JCC, 9600 Bathurst St., 905-303-1821. Contact **Andrea** for info: andrea@srcentre.ca, or ext. 3006.

- Canasta lessons start March 12, 10 a.m. Bridge for beginners starts April 6, 7:30 p.m. Drop-in duplicate bridge, Thursdays at 6:45 p.m.
- Day trips to the theatre: April 22, *Chicago* at Stratford Festival; May 7, *Gypsy* at Shaw Festival.
- Recreational programs for children, teens and young adults with autism spectrum disorder, contact karina@srcentre.ca, or ext. 3042. ■

Hamilton gets a new Jewish film festival

STEVE ARNOLD
SPECIAL TO THE CJN, HAMILTON, ONT

The curtain will rise on a new Hamilton Jewish Film Festival March 22.

Featuring three movies over two nights, the event revolves around the theme of rebellion. A special feature will be a question-and-answer session with the Israeli director of one of the films.

"Each of the people portrayed in these films is following a passion, and that is a rebellion against the status quo," said Wendy Schneider, a member of the organizing committee. "People fulfilling their passions is a form of rebellion."

The festival opens on March 22 with *The Other Story*. It tells of the struggles of two rebellious young women, one looking to trade a life of hedonism for one of structure and another seeking escape from a stifling traditional community. The pair unexpectedly cross paths in Jerusalem.

Leona, directed by Mexican film maker Isaac Cherem, is the story of a young Mexican Jewish woman facing the age-old struggle of winning family acceptance for a forbidden love with a non-Jewish man.

Leona is the story of a young Mexican Jewish woman struggling to win acceptance for a forbidden love.

Cherem is being brought in for a Q-and-A session after a special evening showing of the film. It will be screened a second time on Monday afternoon.

The festival closes Monday evening, March 23, with a showing of *The Picture of His Life*, a documentary of Israeli photographer Amos Nachoum's obsession with swimming underwater alongside a polar bear in the Canadian Arctic and filming the adventure.

It's a journey that brings him face-to-face with painful memories from his past.

Schneider said the movies were chosen from a list of 12 possibilities. Each was screened by the festival's four-member organizing committee.

"In the end we chose them by consensus," she said. "We chose them as a collective."

The new Hamilton Jewish Film Festival is presented in partnership with the newly renovated Westdale Theatre. The former 1935-era neighbourhood bijou was recently revived with a $2.5 million investment that included art deco restoration, new sound and projection technology, new seats, acoustic panelling, accessible seating and a stage.

The partnership developed after Fred Fuchs, an independent film and television producer, newly resident in Dundas, Ont., reached out to organizers of the 15-year-old Israeli Film Festival held at Beth Jacob synagogue offering them a chance to show their movies in a real cinema.

The Beth Jacob group saw an opportunity to expand the mandate of the festival to include the full range of Jewish films rather than focusing only on Israeli productions. It disbanded itself and reformed as a committee of the Hamilton Jewish Federation.

"When Fred Fuchs reached out to us it just made sense to be able to do this in a proper theatre," Schneider said. "At the same time it just made sense for the Hamilton Jewish Film Festival to be affiliated with the Hamilton Jewish Federation."

The new festival is also being seen as a chance to expose the broader Hamilton community to Jewish culture through movies.

Afternoon screenings of the films are at 4 p.m. Evening screenings are at 7 p.m.

Under the terms of what is being called a pilot project, the Westdale group will pay for the screening rights to the movies and keep the profits of the venture. General tickets for the films will be $9 while the special session with Cherem will cost $18. ■

For more information visit thewestdale.ca or jewishhamilton.org.

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Alon Chen: On the cutting edge of science

PAUL LUNGEN
plungen@thecjn.ca

Alon Chen is the newly installed president of the Weizmann Institute of Science, a highly regarded postdoctoral research facility in Rehovot, Israel. Chen, an expert in neuroscience with an interest in issues related to stress, was in Toronto and Montreal recently to introduce himself to the institutes's supporters, meet potential donors and visit at McGill University, where he discussed potential collaboration

What distinguishes the Weizmann Institute from other Israeli academic institutions?

Weizmann first is a research institute, not a university. We don't have a graduate school. We have only masters, PhDs and postdocs.

Its international ranking is extremely high. The Nature (Index) quantified the quality of science by looking at the scientific journals where they publish, and normalized it to the size of the institute. Weizmann was rated, globally, in second place.

As the new president of Weizmann, what is your vision for the Institute?

First is to continue and maintain and increase the way we operate, which is all about excellence.

It is curiosity-driven research. We put a strong emphasis on the quality of the scientist that we recruit. We screen from around the world, with no limits on them being Jewish or Israelis.

We can recruit in any field of science.

We give them full freedom. The management will not interfere with the science. My role is to provide the best infrastructure and state of the art equipment to allow them to do this science.

It's a very multidisciplinary institute. We cultivate interaction between our departments and faculties. Many people work on the border between physics and chemistry, biology and physics, and so on.

We don't use a top down approach Everything is bottom up.

The other uniqueness of Weizmann is the community. It's a beautiful, green campus. Most of the scientists live on campus. We have day care on campus, swimming pools and gyms, so scientists and their families can enjoy, live and interact.

We can go home and meet and continue discussing science when we meet in the playground. This creates a very unique atmosphere, a community feeling. It's a little like a kibbutz This is something I'd like to maintain and even develop

What about commercialization of the science. How does that factor in?

Weizmann focuses on basic or fundamental science, but our technology transfer unit is known around the world. It is responsible for patenting the findings and it interacts with industry.

Probably our biggest success story is a drug for multiple sclerosis called Copaxone, made by Teva. This drug which is more than 20 years old, has made billions for the company. Weizmann benefited from it, and the scientist who developed it, in a unique system that eventually gave the scientist 40 per cent of those revenues. Sixty per cent went to the institute, which is a lot compared to other places.

Tell me about some interesting innovations that have come out of Weizmann recently.

Some are related to pathologies and drugs. We have many in the pipeline. One is a flu vaccine, which is very different than the current vaccine. It's based on antibodies that target proteins that don't change from year to year. This will definitely change the way we deal with the flu. It's now in the late stages of clinical trials.

We have a new treatment for prostate cancer. The basis for this is using plant chlorophyll, which absorbs light. The first clinical trials in Canada started in Toronto,

Alon Chen

at the Princess Margaret (Cancer Centre

This speaks to the story of Weizmann Avigdor Scherz is a plant scientist and yet he's developed a treatment for some cancers. It's non-toxic and non-invasive. A patient is injected with a molecule which is based on chlorophyll. Then, in the operating room, a fibre-optic (cable) is placed in the prostate tumour and a light is shined that illuminates the chlorophyll, which becomes toxic, and cuts down the oxygen supply of the tumour and it shrivels up. It's a 20-minute treatment and the patient walks off the table and goes back to work. It's 95 per cent successful with prostate cancer. It can be applied to any solid tumour that can be seen on an ultrasound, that hasn't metastasized yet.

That's the beauty of Weizmann. A plant scientist taking his knowledge of chlorophyll and photosynthesis, collaborating with someone in a completely different field and saying, what we can we do and letting them follow their curiosity.

You co-authored a paper on sex differences in the way the brain deals with stress. We hear now that sex differences are a construct, and in your paper you say that male brains respond one way and female brains, another way. Do you ever feel pressure to restrict your research because it offends some politically sensitive topic?

No. It's science to discover the facts, so we don't limit.

Of course there are major differences in the way we respond to drugs, the way our biology is designed. And stress is a very good example. People can tell you whatever they want, but males and females do not respond the same to stressful stimuli, not hormonally, not behaviourally. The underlying mechanism is different. Do we need to treat them differently? Probably yes

Do you feel pressure from those who say this violates their ideology?

Not at all. In contrast, there is a huge pressure from the side of women to include females in every research you do. I have a student who is studying sex differences and every time somebody in the lab or in a lecture is talking, she says, okay, did you also check it in females?

Has the Weizmann Institute felt targeted by the BDS movement? Has it lost collaborations because of that?

Here and there we feel it. I think it's much stronger in the humanities, in social sciences. The universities in Israel feel it more strongly.

Within science we don't see it much. I think it's mostly due to the fact that we do such amazing science that our colleagues want to collaborate. We are a major site of knowledge and innovation. I don't think BDS can really damage this.

Have any Weizmann scientists been addressing the coronavirus?

Yes. We have one fantastic scientist, a relatively young scientist, in the faculty of chemistry. He's working on the structure, the protein and the envelope of these viruses. Since the coronavirus epidemic, he got a lot of attention. He is definitely going to contribute to the knowledge about it. ■

This interview has been edited and condensed for style and clarity.

Sonny Goldstein, CFP
President

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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
MARCH 12, 2020

A turning point in American anti-Semitism

ALLAN LEVINE

In 1837, 18-year-old Joseph Seligman arrived in the United States from Germany with little money. Hardworking and ambitious, he started as a door-to-door salesman in rural Pennsylvania and eventually became a merchant and financier.

By the mid-1870s, Seligman was living in New York City. He was a respected investment banker and a friend to President Ulysses S. Grant, who had offered him a cabinet position as secretary of the treasury. Seligman turned down Grant's invitation, but did join the "Committee of Seventy," a group of prominent New Yorkers who battled William Tweed ("Boss Tweed") of Tammany Hall, who for a time ran the city with his corrupt "Ring."

Seligman did not hide his German-Jewish roots, though like many 19th century German Jewish immigrants, he regarded himself as an assimilated "Israelite," rather than a "Jew."

Not everyone agreed. The more visible Seligman and other wealthy German Jews among them, Henry Lehman, Marcus Goldman and his partner Samuel Sachs – succeeded in business, banking and railroads, the more they became targets for anti-Semitism, even among members of the gentile elite who had initially accepted them into their social circles. The subsequent public rejection and discrimination were humiliating.

On June 13, 1877, Seligman and his family arrived for their annual vacation at Saratoga Springs in Upstate New York. Each year for the past decade, the Seligmans had stayed at the luxurious Grand Union Hotel, which was owned by the department store magnate Alexander T. Stewart. Following Stewart's death in April 1876, the hotel was under the control of Henry Hilton, the executor of Stewart's estate. Hilton (no relation to the Hilton hotel dynasty) was a Tammany supporter and did not like Seligman, who had once left Hilton off the guest list for a dinner he hosted honouring Grant.

When Seligman tried to register for his family's stay, he was informed by the hotel manager that on Hilton's order "no Israelites shall be permitted in the future to stop at this hotel." Seligman was astonished.

The manager explained that Hilton believed that a decline of business at the hotel during the past year owed to the large of number of Jewish guests. "Mr. Hilton came to the conclusion," the manager said "that Christians did not like their company and for that reason shunned the hotel."

> "Hilton added that he regarded Seligman as an ill-mannered 'Jew' as opposed to a more genteel 'Hebrew.'"

In an interview with the *New York Times*, Hilton added that he regarded Seligman as an ill-mannered "Jew" as opposed to a more genteel "Hebrew." According to Hilton, Seligman and others of his kind "have brought public opinion down on themselves by a vulgar ostentation, a puffed-up vanity, an overweening display of condition, a lack of those considerable civilities so much appreciated by good American society and a general obtrusiveness that is frequently disgusting and always repulsive to the well-bred."

This incident, the so-called "second battle of Saratoga" (in reference to the first battle, which took place in 1777, during the American War of Independence), set off a month of angry protests by Jews and non-Jews alike including Vice-President William Wheeler, who sharply criticized Hilton's actions.

This marked the start of more anti-Semitic restrictions faced by American Jews. During the next 40 years, German Jews found that professions and social clubs were closed to them, some elite private schools refused to admit their children and they could not purchase property at various summer resorts.

Jews later responded by building their own resorts in the Catskills and creating such organizations as B'nai Brith and the Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA), for political, social and cultural events. But they remained deeply troubled by the rejection and shunning that had occurred.

After 1880, the arrival of thousands of eastern Europeans Jews, who Germans Jews considered uncouth and backward, only made this situation worse in their view. At the same time, stung by the accusations levelled at them by Hilton for being too "showy," many American Jews for decades afterwards became reticent about publicly confronting anti-Semitism. ■

Historian and writer Allan Levine's most recent book is Seeking the Fabled City: The Canadian Jewish Experience.

Healthy Aging

A handy digest to understanding probiotic products

Dr. Vivien Brown

There's lots of talk about probiotics these days – probiotics in your yogurt, probiotics in your bread, even probiotics in your skin care products or household cleaners! But what are probiotics, and why would we need them in the first place?

A widely accepted description of probiotics defines them as "live micro-organisms that, when administered in adequate amounts, confer a health benefit on the host." In plain language, probiotics are "good bugs" or "good microbes" that are meant to help the person taking them.

These friendly microbes help us digest food, maintain health and fight disease. Many Canadians are hearing about how great probiotics are, and are looking to take them as supplements, or to add them to their diet or take them as needed to improve health. Seems like a pretty logical idea, right?

It's important to note that if you are generally a healthy person (physically active, eat well, aren't under a lot of stress) you likely do not need to add probiotics to your regimen.

Not everyone needs a probiotic to stay healthy. An important role for probiotics has been identified as being a treatment for specific conditions, offering symptom relief or resolving the issue entirely. I suggest that you talk with your pharmacist, physician or dietitian before taking probiotics to ensure you have a proper diagnosis, or know why you are taking it. Together, you can select an appropriate probiotic that is the most suitable for you.

With so many products available, and so much chatter around this hot topic, it's no wonder that people are having trouble choosing the right probiotic. What often happens is that people will take something labelled "probiotic," or that purports to have "live bacterial cultures," but as these products often aren't right for their diagnosis, they might not see any health difference and assume that probiotics just don't work. But how wrong that is!

Research and patient experience support the great benefits of probiotics, but only if they are chosen appropriately. "One size fits all" does not apply to probiotics. You will need to know which one to take, for how long to take it and when you can expect benefits. Your health-care provider can help you select the correct probiotic strain and product.

We never walk into a pharmacy and say, "I would like to take some drugs." Your pharmacist will need to know about your symptoms, past experiences, allergies and other factors before making any recommendations. The same applies to probiotics. Different strains of probiotics have very different effects.

This issue of selecting the appropriate probiotic strain has been addressed, and a solution provided, in the Clinical Guide to Probiotic Products, whose publishing and distribution is co-ordinated by the Alliance for Education on Probiotics (AEProbio). The guide is evidence-based, independently prepared and updated every year. It has been recognized as the only reliable resource providing health-care professionals and consumers with a list of probiotic formulations that have been specifically clinically tested – so you can select the appropriate product, dose and formulation for a specific indication.

Within the clinical guide, recommendations are tied to brand names, making it easier for consumer to select the recommended product when purchasing at a pharmacy. Probiotic strain names and doses are also listed. Favourable published clinical evidence for the particular strain(s) presented in each product are given and include numerous conditions.

To quote author Dragana Skokovic-Sunjic, "You need to use the right probiotic, for the right person, for the right reason."

The clinical guide is available in English and French at probioticchart.ca, and on the App Store or Google Play by searching "Probiotic Guide." ■

OBITUARIES AND RELATED NOTICES

STEELES MEMORIAL CHAPEL

Fagan, Henry	February 18, 2020	618 Dovercourt Rd
Zeman, Edith	February 19, 2020	47 Franmore Circle
Kuchinsky, Tatiana	February 18, 2020	182 Charles St
Grnberg, Avraham	February 20, 2020	Private
Wuls, Leo S	February 20, 2020	42 Crimson Forest Dr
Lokshin, Elizaveta	February 20, 2020	Private
Rybak, Neil	February 20, 2020	15 Langtry Place
Glaizer, Irina	February 23, 2020	85 Forest Run Blvd
Grinevich, Lidia	February 23, 2020	Private
Grossman, Moshe	February 23, 2020	289 Hidden Trail
Bier, Arnold Abby	February 25, 2020	Private
Bermack, Earl Jerome(Jerry)	February 26, 2020	16 Winterport Court
Barcessat-Levy- Bencheton, Mimy	February 28, 2020	2 Gwendolen Cres

BENJAMIN'S PARK MEMORIAL CHAPEL

Peter Loewenthal	Feb 27/20	550 Cummer Avenue
Ely Matlow	Feb 26/20	88 Craig Drive
Isaac Mike Wierzba	Feb 25/20	3517 Loyalist Drive
Howard Steinberg	Feb 24/20	5855 Verdun Avenue
Ilse Awin	Feb 27/20	70 Station Street
Stanley Paul	Feb 27/20	30 Gatcombe Circle
Eleanor Steidman	Feb 28/20	110 Promenade Circle
Bernard Van Buren	Feb 27/20	7 Canelli Heights Court
Albert (Ubby) Krakauer	Feb 27/20	51 Old 17th Avenue
Lynda Picov	Feb 27/20	3560 Bathurst Street
Brenda Getz	Feb 29/20	15 Aylin Crescent
Mary Bernstein	Feb 29/20	3560 Bathurst Street
Edward Richardson	Mar 2/20	355 St. Clair Ave. West
David Mendelsohn	Mar 1/20	602 Melita Crescent
Jaffa Glied	Mar 1/20	240 Heath St. West
Jimmy (Shimon) Lash	Mar 2/20	113 Rockford Road

HEBREW BASIC BURIAL

Marilyne (Herson) Berman	Feb 10/20	15 North Park Drive
Saul Fox	Feb 11/20	1500 Steeles Ave. West
Zalman Smilovici	Feb 16/20	1101 Steeles Avenue West

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Don't forget the plum sauce

Remembering a Chinese restaurant in the heart of a Jewish community. PAGE 7

Mental health on campus

As universities react to a growing crisis, Jewish agencies pitch in. PAGE 18

Tranquillity and perseverance

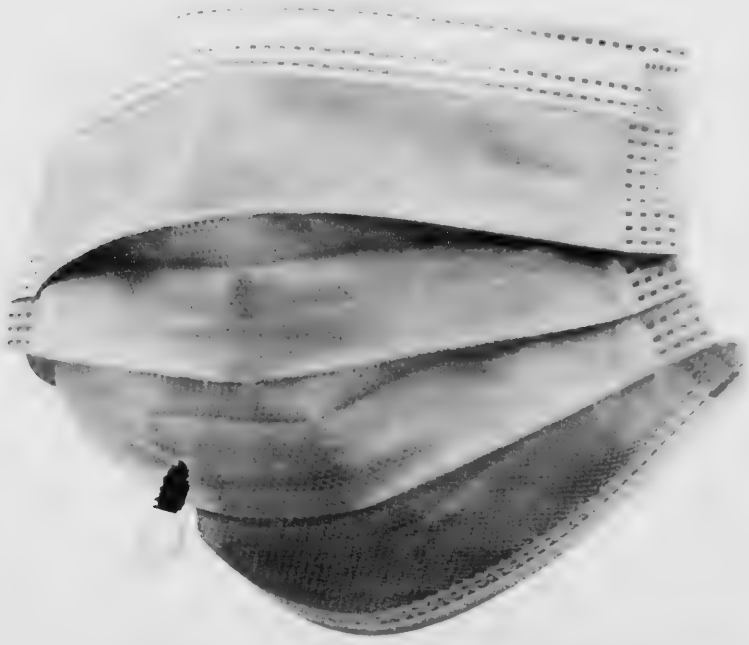
A new book explains how one family spawned a wave of inclusion in Israel. PAGE 26

Preparing for Passover

Looking for something to do? Why not try some of our new Pesach recipes. PAGES 32-35

A NEW REALITY

The Jewish community faces coronavirus. PAGES 4, 6, 8, 10-11, 13, 21-23



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Quotable

> "[redacted] the real hero of the meatball incident was Ivanka. And she proved the world wrong mistakes."
>
> **—Chabad Lubavitch Rabbi Levi Shemtov praising Jared Kushner's role in a Purim event at the White House.**

Inside today's edition

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Trending

The master behind the pegs

Master Mind, the code-breaking game invented by Israeli telephone technician Mordecai Meirowitz, is turning 50 this year. *Vice* writer Duncan Fyfe tried to trace exactly where the idea came from. Bulls and Cows was the numerical game that inspired him, but Meirowitz replaced the digits with coloured pegs, then sold the idea to a British company, Invicta. Subsequently, it was marketed as an "adult" game, for players to arouse one other through knowing looks. As more spin-offs flooded the market, its popularity waned, and nothing is known of Meirowitz's later life story.

The science of street renaming

Ursula Franklin, who survived the Holocaust before becoming a legendary scientist at the University of Toronto, is getting her name on a street on its downtown campus. A community council voted to change the name of Russell Street, which was named for slave owner Peter Russell. In honouring Franklin, who died in 2016 at 94, the road will recognize how her time in a Nazi labour camp motivated her to research how humans related to technology. She was fond of the earthworm theory of civic engagement: the belief that anyone can prepare the soil for social change, even if it's left to the next generations to follow through.

An original Master Mind game ETSY PHOTO

From yeshivah studies to sex parties

Saul Rubinek, the German-born Canadian character actor billed with Al Pacino in the Amazon series *Hunters*, discussed some of his 168 screen credits for the "Random Roles" interview feature, on the website A.V. Club. Before movies like *Unforgiven* and *True Romance*, and TV parts in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Rubinek spent the mid-'70s in the CBC trenches: a filmed play called *Red Emma*, co-starring with Martin Short in the anthology series *Peep Show*, and *The Rimshots*, a pilot whose other cast members were diverted by SCTV. Rubinek got his Hollywood break by starring in the 1982 comedy *Soup for One*, a forgotten Woody Allen knock-off. And yet, it was the role that Quentin Tarantino referenced when they recently met. ■

Compiled by Marc Weisblott of CJN Today, our email newsletter. CJNews.com/today.

Gematria

5

The number of cities where sister rock band Haim planned to perform in Jewish delis across America to promote their upcoming third album, *Women in Music Pt. III*, out April 24.

17

The age at which a future filmmaker attended a Jimi Hendrix concert, where he heard an announcement: "Barry Sonnenfeld, call your mother." (It's the title of his new memoir.)

23

The years in the prison sentence that was handed down by a New York court to disgraced movie mogul Harvey Weinstein, 67, following his conviction for rape and sexual assault.

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Letters to the Editor

Take me out to the ballgame

The Ottawa Jewish Men's and Women's Softball Leagues will be highlighted in a presentation of the Ottawa Jewish Historical Society's Shirley Berman Memorial Lecture Series on June 23 at Kehillat Beth Israel Congregation.

The men's league was established in or around 1927 and the women's league in 1976.

We are looking for any former players or sponsors who can provide us with memorabilia from any era. If you have any pictures, uniforms or score cards to lend us for this event, please contact rbaylin1661@rogers.com or sadinsky@magma.ca.

Noreen Slack
Ottawa

Women's voices silenced

The most striking aspect of the discussion over the changing role of the rebbetzin (Rabbi2Rabbi, March 12) is the astonishing lack of a female voice providing a female perspective on a female role.

Whether by oversight or deliberate omission, this absence of a woman's viewpoint is particularly and painfully ironic, given the article on the silencing of women's voices through *get*-refusal in the same issue.

Stacey Starkman
Thornhill, Ont.

Anti-Semitism in Ukraine

The story "Stepan Bandera and the Holocaust in Ukraine," (Feb. 27) is interesting, but for those familiar with Ukraine's history, anti-Semitism is nothing new.

My late mother came from the city of Lwow, which at that time was part of Poland, and has now become Lviv. My mother described the city as very beautiful and her family had lived there for almost a hundred years.

Before the Second World War they enjoyed a good life, and for the most part coped with anti-Semitism that was lingering in society just like Jews had to cope throughout the centuries wherever they lived.

When Hitler invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, and the Russian occupiers retreated, the Nazis marched in to the delight of many of the Ukrainian citizens of Lwow, who threw flowers upon the Nazi soldiers as they strutted through the streets. They wasted no time in starting the first pogroms, slaughtering 4,000 Jews in just the first couple of days.

Ukrainian nationalists, led by Stepan Bandera and his cohorts, hated the Jews and the Poles within what they always considered their territory.

My mother's oldest sister, Fela, her husband, their parents and their two young sons were taken to a forest and shot in a open pit.

My mother never wanted to set foot in her city again, and survived the Holocaust by posing as an Aryan with false identification papers. Out of her immediate family of five sisters, only she and a sister a year older survived.

Today there is only one remaining synagogue, the Beis Aharon V'Yisrael, for 200 Jews remaining in the city. Some are afraid to openly admit that they are Jews, as anti-Semitism is always very much alive and well.

Miriam Abbou
Toronto

The CJN

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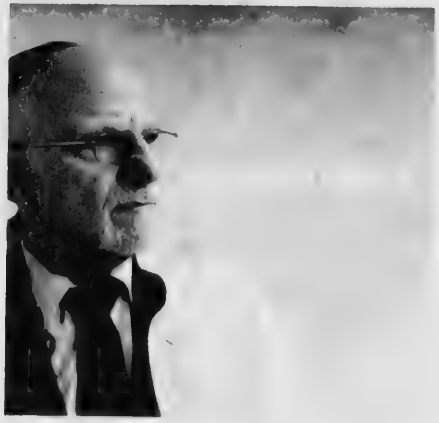

Rabbi2Rabbi

Clergy confront coronavirus

The rabbis discuss how they can comfort their communities during the current pandemic, while still protecting themselves, their families and their congregants

RABBI N. DANIEL KOROBKIN
BETH AVRAHAM YOSEPH CONGREGATION, TORONTO

RABBI LISA GRUSHCOW
TEMPLE EMANU-EL-BETH SHOLOM, MONTREAL

The empty airport at Ben Gurion Airport after Israel imposed travel restrictions due to the spread of the coronavirus.

Rabbi Korobkin: Hopefully, by the time this sees print, the path toward solving the COVID-19 crisis, as with SARS before it, will become a little more clear. But right now, it seems like everything is up in the air. Individuals are quarantined and families are separated. Those who may have been planning travel abroad – perhaps to celebrate Pesach – are staying home. A rabbinic colleague of mine in New York recently announced to his congregation that he, too, has contracted the virus, and the entire congregation has been shut down temporarily.

The irony is that, at times like this, communal and rabbinic support are often most sought after. Who can now pay a shivah call or do the mitzvah of visiting the sick to someone with the virus? We are just starting to discover the level of contagion, so people are being extra-cautious.

But we have examples of righteous rabbis taking risks to help others. The great Rabbi Aryeh Levin used to visit the lepers in the colony in Talbiya, Israel. If you knew a Jew was in need, how would you, as a rabbi, balance your duty to pastor to your congregants versus protecting yourself and your own family?

Rabbi Grushcow: I've just returned from leading a congregational trip to Israel. While we were there, Israel was starting to impose restrictions on travellers and some of our plans had to be modified because of closures and caution. Notably, Israelis who saw our group would yell "Corona!" at us from their cars. It was a wonderful trip, but a strange experience to have had the determination to go to Israel despite the virus, only to be met with fear on the ground.

If I were to visit someone sick with the virus, I wouldn't just be endangering myself and my family – I would risk transmitting the virus to the whole community, including those who are especially vulnerable. As leaders of institutions, we can encourage people to follow best practices on hygiene – and have plenty of hand sanitizer available! But perhaps equally important, we can help minimize panic.

As you suggest, these are times that individuals need each other, and communities and countries do, too. This virus has shown us how permeable all our borders are.

Rabbi Korobkin: I can't help but wonder what lesson we're supposed to take from this pandemic. We can't hug each other or even shake hands, nor are we so cialize or congregating the way we used to without feeling some level of discomfort. Is this a reminder of how important companionship and community are?

Perhaps because of the Internet we've become too isolated from having real human contact, and this virus was sent to remind us how important human contact really is.

I also consider how close we are to Passover. The Egyptians were afflicted with plagues to dispel their false belief that they controlled everything in their society. They were really subject to God's will and their entire way of life could be disrupted at any moment. In our world of advanced technology, it's easy to forget how fragile human life truly is.

We've managed to build so many machines that can transport us, care for us and provide us all manner of comfort, so we sometimes think we're the architects of our own destiny. The tiny spores in this virus have disrupted economic markets, travel and the supply of goods. It is a sobering and humbling reminder of how vulnerable we truly are.

Rabbi Grushcow: It is true, we are vulnerable; and it is true, we are interconnected. This virus reminds us of those truths. But one more truth seems worth noting: we are fortunate, many of us, to have immunologists and epidemiologists, scientists and physicians among our congregations.

In a constantly changing landscape, all of us are uncertain as we navigate a balance between caution and togetherness, risk and benefit. A colleague of mine recently noted that none of us took a class in rabbinical school on how to lead a community through a pandemic. But I take some comfort in knowing we can be guided by those with expertise. ■

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Chopped Liver Paté with Fried Onion and Matzah Crackers
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$6 per portion

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$6 per portion

MAINS

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$24 per portion

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$22 per portion

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(average 4oz per portion)

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$4 per portion

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$30 per dozen

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$15 per 500ml

Seder Plate
$20 per plate

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Frozen Lemon Cake
$55 per cake (Serves 12)

Flourless Chocolate Cake
$55 per cake (Serves 12)

Chocolate Biscotti
$24 per dozen

Dried Fruit, Apricot and Cranberry Biscotti
$24 per dozen

Salted Caramel Matzah Crunch
$24 per dozen

SEDER SET MENU

$40 per person (minimum 10 people)
Seder Plate (one seder plate per order)
Chicken Noodle Matzah Ball Soup
Baby Spinach Salad with Roasted Red and Golden Beets, Balsamic Vinaigrette
Pan Seared Chicken Supreme Served with Mango Peach Salsa with Au Jus
Herb Garlic Crisp Potato
Sautéed Mixed Vegetables

All orders must be received by Monday, March 30. Pick-up date is Wednesday, April 8 from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM.
To download the Passover menu and order form, visit www.beth-tzedec.org.

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בית צדק

Crossing bridges, elbow to elbow

"The problem we have with society at the moment is everyone is afraid of making a mistake," Dr. Mike Ryan, executive director of the health emergencies at the World Health Organization, opined late last week, as the coronavirus pandemic spread across Europe, with North America soon to come, if it hasn't already. "Everyone is afraid of the consequence of error. But the greatest error is not to move. The greatest error is to be paralyzed by the fear of failure."

A little more than 200 years earlier, Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, founder of the Breslov Hasidic movement (you've no doubt come across his followers' impromptu dance parties and distinctive headgear if you've ever been to Israel), wrote the words that would eventually form the lyrics of one of modern Judaism's most popular songs, *Kol Ha-Olam Kulo*. As Ryan spoke on March 13, I could hear it echoing in my head.

Composed during the Yom Kippur War in 1973 by Rabbi Baruch Chait, *Kol Ha-Olam Kulo* is just 10 Hebrew words long, and yet it speaks volumes about our people, our traditions and our history. "*Kol ha-olam kulo,*" the verse begins with a low, nearly monotone delivery, "*gesher tzar me'od*" – "The whole world is a very narrow bridge." "*Ve'ha-ikar,*" the chorus responds in a soaring tune, "*lo lefached klal*" – "But the important thing is not to fear at all."

When I learned the song as a child, my main takeaway was the advice of that chorus – to have no fear. The verse (hand motions and all) was simply a means to getting to that point. But as you get older, you begin to understand the power of those opening lines – you start to see just how narrow that bridge really is. You realize that that's what gives the chorus such muscle – it's not simply not to be fearful, but to achieve such a state, in particular, when we are most challenged.

So how do we do that? To start, we can listen closely to the advice of experts, in our community and beyond. What they have told us, in their words and actions, is that the spread of COVID-19 can be mitigated by "social distancing" and "self-isolation" – two terms we will be glad hopefully never to hear again after a few months. But in the meantime, it is the new reality – along with frequently washing hands, covering coughs and disinfecting surfaces – and the only chance at keeping our most vulnerable safe.

Our community organizations are responding in a clear and decisive manner, adopting models that can allow the Canadian Jewish community to function at a time when we aren't even leaving our houses. Maintaining education levels, in particular, will require tremendous ingenuity, and families can help pick up the slack on that front. I was moved to see a former camp-mate's suggestion on social media that Israeli and Diaspora families take the opportunity of being stuck at home to set up virtual "play dates." I can't think of a better or simpler way to keep Jewish children healthily engaged (and give Jewish parents a needed breather with out all the guilt of YouTube) right now. In addition, reach out to family and friends – keep talking, keep laughing, keep calm.

I hope you won't find it inappropriate if I end this week with a short prayer for our government and the health-care workers on the front lines, for anxious families, employees and business owners, for everyone, really. Take care of yourselves and stay safe. Be strong and be smart. And know that we will cross this bridge together. ■ — YONI

From the Archives

Film set inspiration

ONTARIO JEWISH ARCHIVES, BLANKENSTEIN FAMILY HERITAGE CENTRE, UJA FEDERATION OF GREATER TORONTO

To create an authentic period street scene for the HBO miniseries *The Plot Against America*, the production company sourced archival storefront images including this photograph of Lou Frankel, age 6, in front of the family grocery store, Frankel Grocery, 380 Queen St. E., Toronto, 1917. From the Lou Frankel collection.

SeeJN

Shopping woes

PHOTO BY FLASH90

Israelis buy food at a supermarket in Haifa on March 14. Shoppers in Israel, as in other countries, are seeing long lines at the counter due to coronavirus fears.

Essay

Memories of working at Sea-Hi Famous Chinese Food

Joey Harris

The iconic sign at Sea-Hi Famous Chinese Food. COPY DOCTOROW PHOTO CC BY SA 2.0

I was stir-frying chicken with black bean when I got a phone call from one of my sons. Sea-Hi Famous Chinese Food, a staple on Bathurst Street in the heart of Toronto's Jewish community, had announced it was closing after 59 years. As I got back to my cooking, adding a few tablespoons of water, placing the cover back on the wok as a blast of steam rose up, my thoughts travelled back 50 years.

In the spring of 1970, a high school classmate invited me to come in and bus tables on a Sunday night at Sea-Hi. I had never eaten in the Sea-Hi dining room, and my parents rarely ordered take-out, so I didn't know what to expect. It wasn't just any Sunday night – it was the Sunday following Passover. The entrance was jammed, with people lined up out the door. Others had scored ringside seats around the iconic Buddha at the entrance, waiting for their names to be called.

As I loaded the dishes, I watched the crowd divide and a tiny figure appeared, a petite woman, addressing customers by name, like family. This was my first image of Ms. Chan (Edna Chan, the restaurant's famed proprietor), and the beginning of a wonderful friendship. I soon was working every weekend, a member of an exclusive neighbourhood club: the part-time student staff at Sea-Hi.

While the dining room did a brisk business, I was quickly transferred to the front line – take-out. There was a constant stream of callers and walk-ins placing orders. The take-out staff had assigned duties, with several manning the phones, the counter and the cash. Others packed orders for delivery. At the top of the food chain were the drivers, delivering orders throughout North York and beyond. They got to escape the battlefield, but that didn't mean they wouldn't encounter their own challenges. A missing container of food, the wrong address, or the ultimate sin – no plum sauce!

The Colonel at KFC had his secret recipe, and Pepsi and Coke kept their formulas in a safe. In an Italian restaurant there had better be a basket of bread on the table before you were seated. At Sea-Hi, it was a plate of fried noodles and "a kleyn shisl," a small bowl, filled with their signature plum sauce. You could keep the soya and hot mustard, but forgetting to include plum sauce with a delivery was unforgivable.

The menu included the usual fare: hot and sour soup, egg rolls, different versions of fried rice, sweet and sour chicken balls. But then there were also those dishes unique only to Sea-Hi.

Occasionally, the action in the take-out section would pause as everyone became fixated as an order of deep fried chicken sticks appeared, strips of chicken wrapped in bacon and dipped in batter. Other specialties included shrimp in lobster sauce, dry garlic ribs, and deep fried chicken livers with water chestnuts wrapped with bacon, held together with a toothpick. Some days I would arrive at work early, join the cooks preparing egg rolls, spooning filling onto a wrapper, brushing an egg wash along the wrapper's edges and then folding the wrapper and sealing the ends ready for the fryer.

Frequently I worked well past midnight, walking home or grabbing a ride with one of the drivers on a last run. I never felt tired at the end of a shift. Not all evenings ended quietly, mind you. The New Year's Eve food fight was one of them.

It started innocently enough. Two customers came in after midnight and placed an order. They watched through the doorway as the kitchen staff transferred food into containers following their own New Year's Eve party; doggy bags for later. The customers thought these containers were being filled for their order and got upset. Henry, affectionately know as "aap sui" (little duck), went out to calm them down and took a punch. A couple of waiters from the dining room heard the commotion and came to his defence, chasing the customers onto Bathurst Street, pressing them against cars stopped at the light, their martial arts skills on full display, transforming the street into a kung fu fight scene.

I worked at Sea-Hi on and off for 10 years, enjoying the frenetic pace, becoming adept at using a wok. I carried those skills through university, supported, in part, by Chan and later Stanley Chiu, who purchased the restaurant in 1977. Chan was very good to all of us, we all thought we were her favourites, somehow. She was a ball of energy, watching everything and keeping things moving.

Eventually, I left Sea-Hi and moved out of town. When I would return to visit family, I'd drop by, showing my kids where I once worked.

I was thinking about all of those amazing memories as I placed the plate of chicken and black bean on the table, scooped some rice from the steamer onto our plates, and took the egg rolls from the oven. Meanwhile, my wife grabbed Chan's plum sauce from the fridge. ■

Joey Harris is a retired RCMP forensic scientist living in North York.

Jewish community reacts to virus

Schools and synagogues closed as part of measures to deal with coronavirus outbreak

ALEX ROSE
arose@thecjn.ca

A group of Jewish day schools in Toronto announced on March 12 that they will be closing their doors starting Monday, March 16 due to the coronavirus, and, because of the Passover break, will not be reopening them until April 20.

"While this is a time of significant uncertainty, two things are clear: We cannot take risks with the health of our students and staff, nor can we do anything that risks undermining substantial measures authorities have enacted to protect public health," the statement said. The decision had been taken with co-ordination of Toronto Public Health, the Ontario Ministry of Education, UJA Federation of Greater Toronto and their partner Jewish day schools.

According to the email Tanenbaum CHAT high school sent out to its families, the school will be moving to online classes.

Other schools will also be reaching out to share their specific learning plans, the statement said.

Ora Shulman, head of school for Associated Hebrew Day Schools, said the faculty is working on developing an "authentic distance learning plan" using a variety of resources. The school has a professional development meeting scheduled for March 16 for staff to collaborate and create the program, and following the meeting the school will share the specific details of the plan.

The letter was signed by the following schools: Associated Hebrew Day Schools, Bialik Hebrew Day Schools, Tanenbaum CHAT, The Toronto Heschel School, The Leo Baeck Day School, Montessori Jewish Day School, Netivot Hatorah Day School, Paul Penna Downtown Jewish Day School and Robbins Hebrew Academy.

Hillel Ontario announced in an email on March 13 that its spaces would remain open, but it's cancelling all formal in-person gatherings. It also said it would only provide for take away food. Informal get-togethers may still proceed, and staff and students can still meet at a location of their choosing.

A health care worker at Shaare Zedek Medical Centre, in Israel on Jan. 27.
YONATAN SINDEL/FLASH90 PHOTO

On March 13, Quebec ordered all schools to close for two weeks. Herzliah High School/Talmud Torah spokesperson Tova Havis said there is an expectation that it will be extended to Passover. She said that they will be livestreaming classes and special instruction is being arranged for the youngest students in kindergarten through Grade 3.

Shuls in Toronto are also feeling the effects of the coronavirus. Beth David synagogue announced on March 15 that it would be suspending all of its services until the current risk is alleviated, and also suggested congregants refrain from attending services elsewhere.

"The mitzvah of preserving our health and that of our community far overrides the mitzvah of praying in a minyan," the shul said in a statement on its website.

At Beth Sholom Synagogue, the president tested positive for COVID-19, and entered a 14-day period of self-isolation. Beth Sholom closed its building down on March 9 for a comprehensive cleaning and sanitization of the building following Toronto Public Health guidelines. They announced the building would stay closed through Friday and instead open for Shabbat morning services on March 14.

It also said it would be cancelling public food services and that the office would be closed until March 23. Other members of the Beth Sholom community who came into contact with the president are also in self-isolation, although as of March 11 no one else had tested positive for the coronavirus.

Other synagogues are also taking similar precautions. Beth Emeth Bais Yehuda Synagogue said in an email on March 12 that it would be cancelling most of its in-person events, meetings and programs and all of its events with food, and moving its Shabbat and weekday services to larger spaces to comply with social distance guidelines. Beth Tzedec announced that it would be pursuing similar courses of action.

On March 13, the Montreal Board of Rabbis sent out a statement about how their shuls are responding to the coronavirus.

"For the foreseeable future, we have cancelled all programming, and have moved all meetings and classes to online platforms," it said.

Benjamin's Funeral Home in Toronto added a notice to its website saying all funerals must be fewer than 200 people.

The travel industry is also feeling the squeeze from the spread of the coronavirus, as countries are closing borders and cancelling flights, and people fear travelling abroad.

Ehud Telem, president and CEO of Peerless Travel, says his travel management company has seen a 70 to 80 per cent decline in sales since the outbreak.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

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Claims Conference ועידת התביעות
The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany

ATTENTION HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS AND SPOUSES

The Claims Conference has negotiated the following liberalizations with the German government

Article 2 and CEE Fund

The following Jewish Holocaust survivors, who were persecuted in the open ghettos identified below, for at least three months, may be eligible for a monthly pension from the Article 2 or CEE Fund

- In Romania, survivors persecuted in Botosani, Galati, Focsani, Tecuci, Roman, Piatra Neamt, Barlad, Vaslui, Alba Iulia, Constanta, Targu Neamt, Harlau, Buzau, Ramnicu Sarat, Stefanesti, Craiova, Pascani or Bacau between August 1941 and August 1944;
- In Bulgaria, survivors persecuted in Plovdiv, between September 1942 and September 1944.
- In the Netherlands, survivors persecuted in the ghetto in Amsterdam, between September 1941 and September 1943

Note: Jewish Nazi victims from these open ghettos in Romania, Bulgaria and Amsterdam may also be entitled to a pension from the ZRBG (Ghetto Pension). This pension is not administered by the Claims Conference

The maximum annual income and asset limit for the Article 2 Fund and for social welfare services has been changed. The annual maximum income for eligible recipients is now CAD **$66,300** per annum and the maximum allowable assets held by the recipient has been raised to CAD **$1,326,090** (excluding the principle residence of the applicant). The German Ministry of Finance has determined that "old-age pensions and pensions on account of reduced earning capacity, occupational accident, occupational illness, or death, or comparable benefits" should not be included in calculating an applicant's income for the purpose of an application to the Article 2 Fund. For more details see **http://www.claimscon.org/what-we-do/compensation/background/article2/comparable-payments/.**

NOTE: It is not possible to receive an Article 2 Fund pension in addition to a pension from the BEG.
Applicants who were a fetus during the time that their mother suffered persecution described may also be eligible. Eligibility is dependent on all the criteria of the fund being met and for a full set of criteria see **www.claimscon.org**

Child Survivor Fund

The Child Survivor Fund will provide those who took part in the Kindertransport a one-time payment amounting to €2,500 per person

Participants of the Kindertransport in this sense are deemed to be Jewish persons who met the following cumulative criteria at the time of the transport.

- they were under 21 years of age at the time of the transport, unaccompanied by their parents and took part in a transport that was organized by third parties, not organized by the German government, in order to escape potentially threatening persecution by German forces;
- they were transported from somewhere within the German Reich or from territories that had been annexed or occupied at the time;
- the transport took place between November 9, 1938 and September 1, 1939 or was approved by the German authorities after November 9, 1938 but before September 1, 1939.

In addition, all pension recipients who were in one of the open ghettos in Romania, Bulgaria or Amsterdam named above and born after January 1, 1928, may be entitled to a one-time payment from the Child Survivor Fund administered by the Claims Conference

New Payment to Spouses of deceased Article 2/CEE Fund beneficiaries

Beginning January 1, 2020, the Claims Conference will provide payments to eligible spouses of deceased recipients of the Article 2 and Central and Eastern European (CEE) Funds.

A spouse of an Article 2/CEE Fund beneficiary may, upon the death of the Article 2/CEE Fund beneficiary, be entitled to receive €513 per month for up to 9 months, paid in three quarterly installments, if the following conditions apply:

1. The spouse is alive as of January 1, 2020 or the date of application, whichever is the latter; and
2. The spouse is alive at the date of the payment; and
3. The spouse was married to the Article 2/CEE Fund beneficiary at the time of death of the Article 2/CEE Fund beneficiary; and
4. The Article 2/CEE Fund recipient passed away at any point while he or she was receiving a payment from the program.

The spouse of a Holocaust survivor must be alive at the time of each payment.
Other heirs, including children, are not entitled to receive any payment in lieu of the spouse.

To download an application from our website, please go to: **www.claimscon.org/apply**
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Death and life and the whole damn thing

Bernie Farber

> *The past few weeks, have thrust my wife, Karyn, and I dramatically into the real world of pain and loss, happiness and joy.*

Racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, homophobia and anti-Indigenous discrimination are all rising. The coronavirus has instilled yet a new level of fear driving us further into social isolation. With all these worries we sometimes lose sight of the small but important things in life: our personal relationships with family and friends.

The past few weeks, have thrust my wife, Karyn, and I dramatically into the real world of pain and loss, happiness and joy. In mid-February we heard of the death of a dear friend of over 35 years, Tom Stewart.

Stewart was an early part of my circle. We met following graduation and both of us worked at the Youth Services Bureau in Ottawa. There he met David Kelley. They fell in love and became life partners. Both were active in the LGBTQ community and when they left to greener pastures in Toronto, they continued their work.

Kelley was the executive director of the People with AIDS Foundation. The same disease which sadly took his life in 1996. Stewart was devastated, but his indomitable spirit carried on. He continued his work with a telephone peer counselling service, a couple's support group for gay men and a bridge club for gays and lesbians. Later, Stewart co-founded an association for LGBTQ employees at Bell Canada.

He loved all things royal. In the early 2000s when the Queen and Prince Philip visited Toronto, the Canadian Jewish Congress participated in a multicultural festival in their honour. We made Stewart an honorary Jew for a day and he had the opportunity to speak with both monarchs.

He familiarized himself completely with the Canadian Jewish community and when the Queen and the prince stopped by our booth, Prince Philip asked him about the number of Jews in Canada. Without missing a beat Stewart responded, "Your Royal Highness we Jews are found in every corner of this country from St. John to Victoria and we are proud Canadians."

Stewart was diagnosed with leukemia in 2015. His prognosis was poor. Yet his enthusiasm for life, and love of people seemed to drive him onward. He quietly passed away on Valentine's Day this year; his last words called for his soulmate David Kelley with whom he has now been reunited.

A few days later, Karyn's uncle, Ivan Silverman, succumbed to lung cancer. Ivan had been diagnosed with Stage 4 of this disease five years ago. Doctors gave him less than a year. He defied the odds.

Silverman's life was not always easy. He worked at his father's upholstery store for a bit, then got into the restaurant and catering business. He had other business ventures some successful, others not so much. But it was Silverman's big heart and warm smile that we all remember.

Silverman was my mother-in-law's baby brother. She was more than 10 years older than him. He quickly became that uncle who was there for his sister, a single mother juggling three young children. Silverman became the father figure who taught them how to water ski, ice skate and to enjoy life.

However, it was in his later years that Silverman would embrace a vocation which truly demonstrated his mettle. He entered a course at Toronto's Humber College to obtain a diploma as a funeral director.

Upon graduation he returned to Ottawa where he worked with a large funeral home. Silverman was the go-to funeral director for the Ottawa Chevra Kadisha. There he excelled. His big heart, warm smile and genuine love of people brought so much comfort to so many. Listening to the stories during the recent week of shivah gave his three wonderful sons, his two loving sisters and the rest of us a whole new insight into Silverman's soul.

As we were struggling with losing Silverman and Kelley, we received the wonderful news that later this summer Karyn and I will be grandparents for the first time. We are consumed with joy and happiness. It's that circle of existence helping us understand the vagaries of death and life and the whole damn thing. May the memories of Ivan Silverman and Tom Kelley be for a blessing. ■

How to balance commitment to community and 'social distancing'

Pepole pray in enclosed areas allowing 10 people in a time, at the Western Wall, Judaism's holiest prayer site in the Old City of Jerusalem, March 15.
YONATAN SINDEL/FLASH90 PHOTO

Rabbi Julia Appel

These are unprecedented times. For the Jewish community, so much of how we maintain ourselves is through gathering in person – from Purim to Passover, from Kiddush to morning minyan, from shivah visits to classes. Our tradition teaches, *Al tifrosh min ha-tzibbur* (Don't separate yourself from the community). And yet, it also teaches, *Kol Yisra'el areivim zeh bazeh* (All of Israel is responsible for one another).

How can we balance both a commitment to community and a commitment to doing our part to reduce the potential spread of COVID-19? How can we care for those in our community for whom "social distancing" might trigger mental health issues, isolation and financial distress?

Here are some suggestions:

• **Shift classes and discussion groups online.** Most teleconference services offer meetings in which participants can choose either video or phone conferencing to participate. This is especially important for the less technologically adept or those without computers. Texts can be scanned and emailed to participants. You can also offer connection to online classes that your community can take together.

• **Online and phone office hours for checking in.** For clergy, staff, lay leaders and volunteers, set up and publicize office hours when community members can easily call or video-conference to speak with someone for support. An online scheduling service can allow people to select available slots themselves.

• **Lunch breaks and "visiting" time.** For smaller, pre-established groups, like youth groups, university students and clubs, schedule unstructured "hangouts" on video-conference, when people who normally see each other casually can simply drop by and spend time together without any agenda.

• **Text groups and email lists.** Many people, especially teens and young adults, are already part of group chats with family and friends. It's like an email list, but for short messages, Internet links, pictures and videos. Institutions can create and allow community members to sign up for new chat groups by demographic (such parents of young kids at home) or interests (like Jewish jokes).

• **Include video messages in your communications.** Seeing another person's face increases a sense of human interaction and personalizes the message. To reach younger community members, post video messages across social media platforms as well.

• **Create a phone tree.** Without regular in-person interactions, vulnerable community members may not have a way to communicate distress. Offer a sign-up form for those who would like regular phone calls from a friendly staff or community member. Also offer a sign-up for volunteers who can make wellness calls.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

> *We must find ways to meet social distancing with emotional and communal closeness.*

• **Livestream services and other events.** You may wish to livestream Shabbat or holiday services, or connect your community members to other livestreamed services available. For more traditional communities, you can livestream morning minyanim, Kab balat Shabbat on Friday night before sundown, *Havdalah* or other ritual events.

• **Create funds and food distribution systems for those experiencing financial distress.** In consultation with central resources, determine how you and your community can help raise funds and distribute food and supplies to those who need it. Additionally, grocery delivery and online ordering has made food delivery more available in the last few years.

I am sure we will all come up with more ideas in the coming days and weeks. As Los Angeles Rabbi Yosef Kanefsky wrote in the *Forward* this week: "Every hand that we don't shake must become a phone call that we place. Every embrace that we avoid must become a verbal expression of warmth and concern. Every inch and every foot that we physically place between ourselves and another, must become a thought as to how we might be of help to that other, should the need arise."

We must find ways to meet social distancing with emotional and communal closeness. May we all find comfort in the days ahead, knowing that the disruptions we undertake now help us care for one another. ■

Rabbi Julia Appel is the senior Jewish educator and campus rabbi at the University of Toronto Hillel.

Do you disagree with our columnists? Have your say by writing to **cjninfo@gmail.com.**

Camus's 1947 novel is a lesson for our times

Sara Horowitz

As we watch the spiralling anxieties and uncertainties spawned by the spread of COVID-19, we see scientists, health care workers and policy makers work to get a handle on the medical and social implications of the new virus.

The news cycle becomes personal as we know someone, or know someone who knows someone, who may have been exposed to the new coronavirus, or – increasingly – as we see our daily life and finances bearing its impact. Thanks to the technologies of trade and travel that have made the world smaller, we feel, and fear, not only the spread of illness, but also its non-medical consequences – the dire effects on global economy, community, political life and tolerance.

French-Algerian novelist and philosopher Albert Camus probed the intertwining of physiological and societal ramifications of pandemic in his 1947 novel, *The Plague*. Set in the Algerian port city Oran, the novel traces the spread of the bubonic plague and the battle to defeat it. Camus imagines a range of human responses to the epidemic raging in Oran that resonates powerfully with the varied official and popular responses to the current pandemic.

The first impulse of government bureaucrats in *The Plague* is denial. Their impulse is to squelch the spread of clear and accurate information. But doctors treat patients and see the real life effects of the illness, and refuse to deny reality. The ethics of their profession puts them squarely at odds with the politicos. They work to contain the epidemic by sealing off Oran, to find a treatment for the disease, and to ease the suffering of its victims.

Different from contemporary medical thrillers, Camus's novel focuses most closely on the human implications of the medical crisis. Some people fight the plague with scientific knowledge, human compassion and a commitment to truth. Others look for comforting explanations for its resurgence and

Tourists in Jerusalem wearing face masks. Sara Horowitz draws parallels between the spread of the coronavirus and Albert Camus's novel *The Plague*. FLASH90 PHOTO

> *The Plaque used natural catastrophe as a metaphor for human-wrouaht catastrophe.*

casualties, blaming victims or seeing in it theological meaning. Some figure out ways to turn a profit from the suffering of others and social chaos. Others try to sneak out of the quarantined city, looking to save themselves.

Camus drew on historical material for his novel. The city of Oran had weathered several cholera epidemics, so there were pertinent local narratives. And Europe had endured several pandemic plagues, with devastating consequences. Most notably, the bubonic plague that raged through Europe and Asia in the mid-14th century provided Camus with inspiration.

Known as the Black Death or Black Plague, its fatalities exceeded 25 million. In addition to the lives claimed by the pandemic, thousands of European Jews were scapegoated, massacred by their fellow Europeans who blamed the plague on Jewish conspiracies. Jews were captured and tortured to obtain "confessions" about nefarious Jewish plots to poison Christian Europe. Notable Jewish communities, especially in Germany, were destroyed, and Jewish property confiscated.

Written so soon after the Second World War, *The Plague* used natural catastrophe as a metaphor for human-wrought catastrophe. The epidemic and its societal consequences stood, first and foremost, for the evils of Nazi Germany. It pointed, as well, to the postwar atrocities of the Soviet Union, something many of Camus's contemporaries refused to acknowledge.

The novel, published almost three quarters of a century ago, has lasting relevance. It warns us that politically motivated obfuscation endangers us. As the plague spreads in Oran, the narrator realizes that "all our troubles spring from our failure to use plain, clean-cut language. So I resolved always to speak, and to act, quite clearly."

However dire, things must be named and talked about truthfully. Inconvenient facts are not "fake news" to be spun, denied or misdirected. Precisely in times of crisis, individual moral responsibility becomes critical.

Camus's novel was most prescient not in its contending not simply with the past and present, but in its concern with the future. As the narrator notes, "the plague bacillus never dies or disappears for good." ■

News

Vancouver's King David High School set to expand

LAUREN KRAMER
PACIFIC CORRESPONDENT

As it enters its 16th year, Vancouver's King David High School is celebrating its growth with a $6.5 million expansion funded by the Diamond Foundation. Set to break ground this summer, the expansion will add four new classrooms, a new music room, an innovation lab, a faculty workroom and new change rooms for KDHS's 227 students.

"We're so full right now that we can't offer all the courses and opportunities we'd like to. Our classroom utilization rate is at 96 per cent and these additions will give us the capacity to expand certain grades beyond the numbers they're at now," said KDHS head of school Russ Klein.

The school population has increased considerably since KDHS opened. In 2010, there were 139 students enrolled in grades 8 through 12, but in recent years, numbers have hovered between 215 and 236. Klein expects the numbers to stay around 225 in the next five years.

"We had to find our way in those first few years, to find our heart and who we wanted to be," he reflected. "Vancouver has no shortage of great public and private schools, so we're in a very competitive market, and when we first opened, we weren't quite ready in terms of our infrastructure and our levels of support for teachers and administration."

Klein said that well over 90 per cent of KDHS graduates are accepted to university, and while that remains a community value, the school's true value proposition is graduating young adults who are healthy, balanced and have the skills to be adaptable and flexible in their lives.

"We recognize that there's so much uncertainty and pressure on our students today. We believe we have to pay attention to our students' mental health, so we spend a lot of time trying to figure out how to help them holistically," he said.

King David High School students.

While KDHS students are encouraged to volunteer, Klein and his team are creating a formal service program wherein students will volunteer on three levels: at the school, within the Jewish community, and in the broader community. "Kids and teachers need to have meaning and purpose, so the message we're trying to send is, instead of trying to find your passion – because you don't have to know what you'll be when you grow up – look around and see how you can create a meaningful contribution around you. That might ignite your passion," Klein said.

The school has added a number of programs in the 12 years that Klein has been at its helm. It now offers accelerated math and science, music, a foods program, outdoor education and a wellness counselling and mindfulness program. There are multiple off-site experiences for students, including a trip to Los Angeles, a school retreat and an annual visit to Israel for Grade 8 students. A mentoring program and a peer counselling program are also in the works.

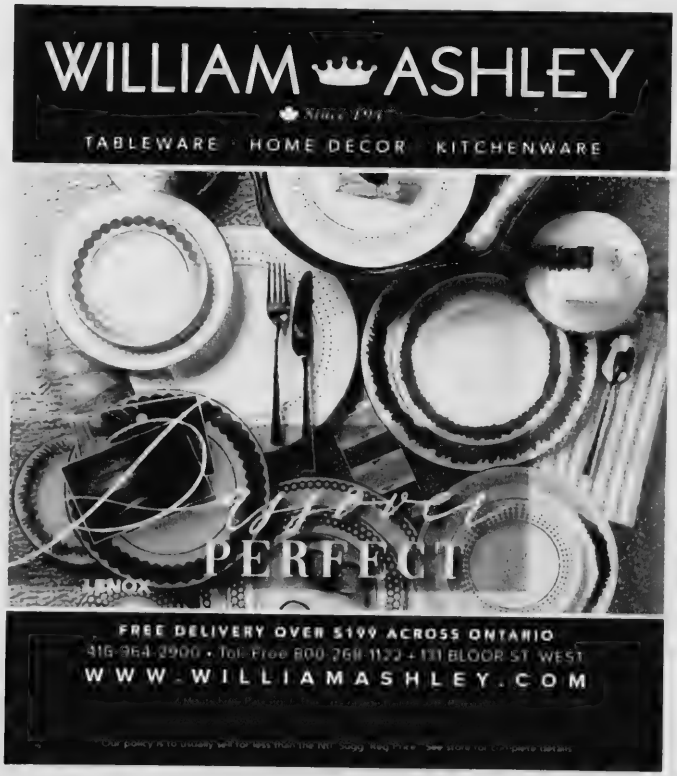
Given the high cost of living in Vancouver, the school has placed emphasis on teacher retention. "A few years ago, after we lost seven teachers in one year, I worked with the board on a program to invest in our teachers, support their professional growth and improve their working conditions," Klein said. "We wanted to give them incentive to be at King David rather than at a public school, so we now give teachers $5,000 over whatever they would earn at a public school. We added other perks, too, like incentivized memberships at the Jewish community centre, increased RRSP matching contributions and many more professional development opportunities."

The strategy has worked, and while a handful of teachers have left to pursue different lifestyles, none has left to take a job elsewhere in the past two years.

Klein said the board is also cognizant of the challenges of long-term sustainability resulting from Vancouver's affordability issue, and is focused on creating different revenue streams and strengthening its philanthropy program. An endowment campaign is underway to increase funds for tuition assistance to $5 million, from $1 million, over the next five years. Forty per cent of students at the school receive tuition assistance.

Klein measures the success of KDHS in a number of ways. One is the student attrition rate, which is just four per cent. "That's unheard of – normally you're close to 10 per cent," he said. "Our students, by and large, no longer leave the school for the typical reason kids leave, because they're happy. They've gotten the message that they're supported, and that they'll be successful when they leave. We focus on individual students and do a good job of leading them where they are and giving them opportunities to demonstrate their learning."

Another measure of success for Klein is the messages he receives from and about KDHS graduates as they pursue their respective careers, often far from home. "We hear that our kids are getting together for *yamim tovim* and Shabbat meals when they can't get home. They're creating community wherever they go," he says proudly. The word has travelled as far as Europe, he adds. "I had a family in Italy contact me specifically for this reason. They'd heard how successful our kids are at creating community once they leave high school." ■



Community events cancelled due to virus

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

A significant portion of his business comes from arranging trips for people in Israel, which on March 9 announced it would put all arrivals from abroad into quarantine for two weeks.

Liberation 75, the international gathering of Holocaust survivors, their descendants and educators scheduled to take place in Toronto from May 31 to June 2 to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the end of the Holocaust, said in a statement on March 12 that the gathering is still scheduled to go ahead, but its organizers will continue monitoring the situation closely.

The Consulate General of Israel in Toronto announced it would be suspending many services on March 10, and that urgent consular services would be provided by mail.

In Montreal, the Jewish community's normally busy spring season will be directly affected by measures announced by Quebec Premier François Legault on March 12. All indoor public events of more than 250 people will be cancelled until further notice, he said, and the government is also asking that all "non-essential" public events be voluntarily cancelled.

The Segal Centre for Performing Arts cancelled the remaining run of its production of *The Times They Are a Changin'*. The next play *Oslo*, set to open April 19, is still on for now.

And Montreal's Federation CJA announced it is implementing a "three-week rule" regarding the scheduling of community programming, meaning it will review whether a program will go ahead three weeks prior to the scheduled date.

In Winnipeg, Chabad announced its March 18 challah bake would be moved to an online livestream. Participants can pick up challah kits, which include the necessary ingredients, a custom apron and special challah bag, from the Jewish Learning Centre on the two days preceding the bake.

The Jewish Heritage Centre's annual "Kanee" lecture in Winnipeg, which was scheduled to take place on May 13, has been postponed.

On March 13, the Government of Manitoba mandated all schools close from March 23 to April 10, but to remain open the week of March 16. Winnipeg's Gray Academy recommended parents keep their children home if they feel more comfortable doing so. Teachers met on March 15 to figure out a plan to teach students at home.

> *The mitzvah of preserving our health ... far overrides the mitzvah of praying in a minyan*
>
> **Beth David Synagogue**

On March 12, around 1,200 people attended the annual Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada Holocaust Symposium for high school students, and the night before, around 200 people viewed the premiere of Yolanda Papini-Pollock's new documentary about Holocaust education at Berney Theatre.

In Vancouver, synagogues began cancelling events after Purim. A public speaking competition scheduled for March 12 at the local JCC was cancelled, as was the NCSY Purim party on the same night. Vancouver Talmud Torah (VTT) school remains open as of March 13, although a Grade 6 Shabbaton was cancelled.

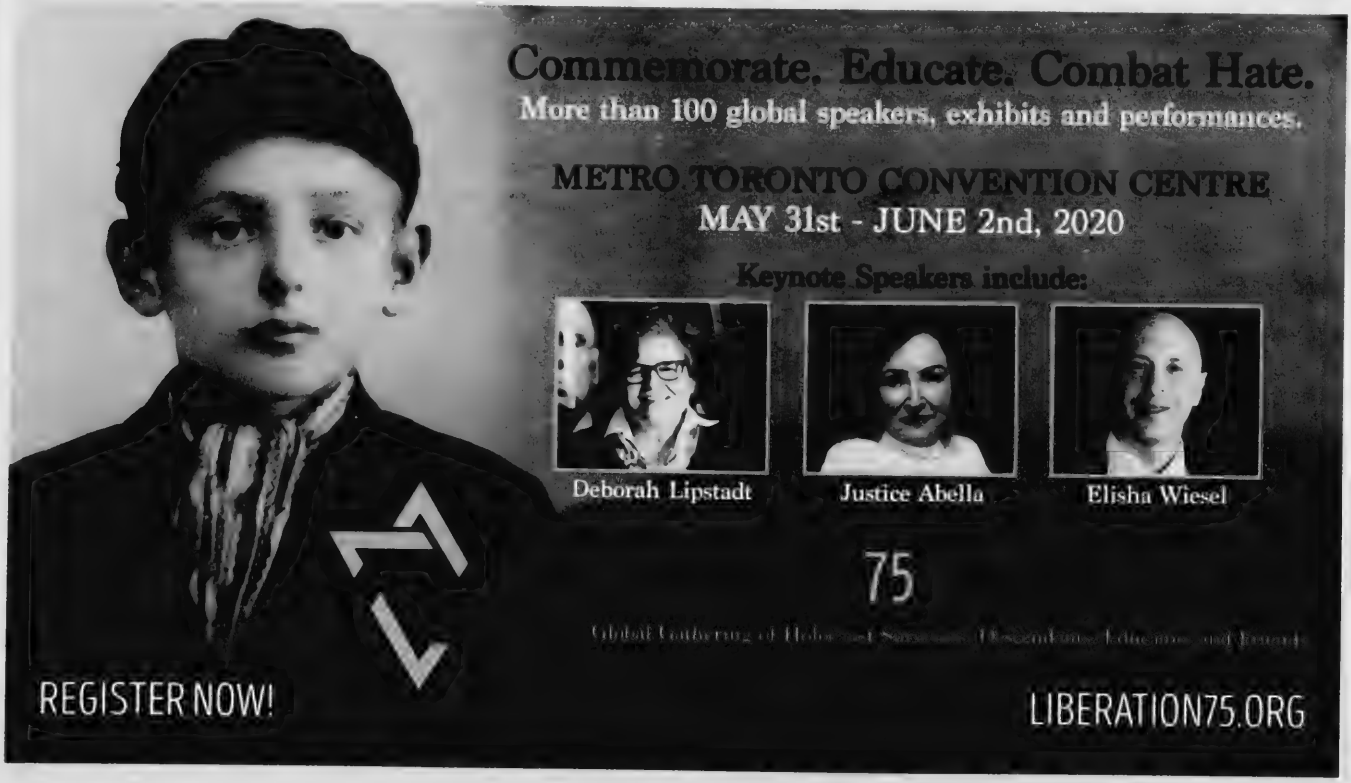
King David High School in Vancouver is following the updates from the BC Ministry of Education, and has a professional day March 16 to review its distance learning plan.

In Hamilton, Temple Anshe Shalom broadcast Shabbat services and classes online. Adas Israel cancelled its daily minyan and Beth Jacob Congregation cancelled all services.

The Hamilton Jewish Federation cancelled all events and programs for April. As of March 15, Hamilton Hebrew Academy is remaining open, although students who travelled abroad are asked to stay away from school for two weeks. Kehila Heschel Jewish Community Day School shut down and will use online learning packages.

In Jerusalem, at the Rothstein International School (RIS) at Hebrew University, most international students are electing to stay at the school, said Noam Shoval, provost of the RIS, in an email to *The CJN*. In Israel, all university courses were moved online, meaning students who choose to go home can still complete their courses. Shoval said the dormitories at the school are still open, and that Hebrew University has delayed the start of the spring semester by a week, to March 22. ■

With files from Janice Arnold, Myron Love, Lauren Kramer and Steve Arnold



Hamilton Jews remain a target for hate crimes

STEVE ARNOLD
SPECIAL TO THE CJN, HAMILTON, ONT.

Hamilton's Jews remain the primary target for hate crimes based on religion according to a new report.

The latest annual report of the hate crime unit of the Hamilton Police Services shows 32 hate-related incidents based on religion in 2019 with 30 of those incidents targeting the Jewish community.

In total, the unit recorded 92 hate-related incidents during 2019. While most involved only harassment, eight incidents were recorded as actual crimes. Half of those crimes were recorded against Jews. Blacks were the targets in 34 of the racial incidents.

A year after Hamilton topped a Statistics Canada report on hate incidents the police survey for 2019 showed a 26.4 per cent drop in reported incidents – from 125 in 2018 to 92 in 2019.

Of the total, 38 of the reported incidents and three of the crimes concerned bias based on religion. Racial bias accounted for 34 incidents and five of the reported crimes, with blacks as the primary targets. Another eight incidents targeted the LGBT community.

Seven arrests were recorded in 2019, up from three the year before. Reported crimes included assault and mischief, most involving graffiti.

The report was presented to the city's Police Services Board on March 12. Members welcomed the overall drop in numbers, while worrying the official statistics capture only a small portion of the overall problem. They also expressed hope a new online reporting system will bring out more incidents.

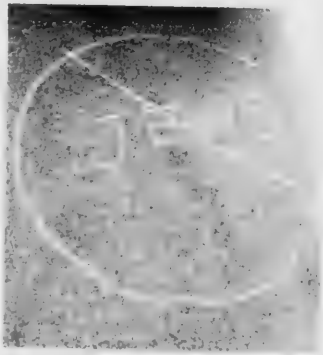
"It's good news that there's a decline in the overall incidents," said Mayor Fred Eisenberger, a member of the board. "This new system will be a great tool and I hope it gives people the confidence to report."

The new system, announced recently, allows people to report incidents through a link on the police department's web site, rather than having to go into a station or have an officer come out.

Sgt. Paul Corrigan, head of the Hate Crime and Extremism Unit, said as many as two-thirds of all hate-related incidents are never reported to police, often because of a fear of police or feeling that there's no point in reporting an event.

The new system may start to change that thinking.

"We know hate crimes are generally under reported and we've heard loud and clear that people need a way to report incidents to police in a manner that is comfortable to them," Hamilton police's Deputy Chief Frank Bergen said in a news release announcing the system.



Graffiti found at Beth Jacob Congregation in Hamilton, Ont., in 2019.

"Hate crime in Hamilton is not acceptable. Left unchecked, we know hate crime can have a far reaching impact on communities. This new online reporting system is a way anyone can report a hate/bias incident and ensure appropriate resources are assigned to make our community safer," he added.

The 2019 report comes a few days after Statistics Canada's 2018 review of hate incidents. It found Hamilton had the highest rate of hate-related incidents in the country at 17.1 per 100,000 population.

A Statistics Canada report last year showed Hamilton had the country's highest number of reported incidents. The 92 incidents reported in 2019 are a sharp change from the 10-year average of 128.4 incidents.

The federal agency reported last year that while 2018 saw a 13 per cent decrease in reported hate crimes across the country (from 2,073 incidents to 1,798), incidents in Hamilton rose 6.6 per cent from 2017. That rise followed a hike of 30 per cent in 2017.

With reported incidents averaging 17.1 per 100,000 population the rate in Hamilton was more than three times the national average. ■

The new hate/bias reporting tool is available on the Hamilton police website at www.hamiltonpolice.on.ca. Incidents can still be reported by phone at 905-546-4925 or in person at any police station.

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Rabbi must pay woman $23,000 for harassment

JANICE ARNOLD
Jarnold@thecjn.ca, MONTREAL

A Montreal rabbi has been ordered to pay $23,000 to a woman who claimed he harassed her for years about her divorce.

In a civil suit brought by Aviva Engel, Quebec court Judge Éric Dufour found that Rabbi Shalom Spira had overstepped the freedom of religion in pursuing her over more than 10 years through dozens of verbal and written messages.

Initially, he tried to convince Engel, a former neighbour, not to divorce her husband and, later, that the *get* he gave her was not valid under Jewish law because, according to Rabbi Spira, it had not been granted willingly.

The Orthodox rabbi, who had been spiritual leader of Congregation Kol Yehouda in Côte St-Luc, Que., was previously found guilty of criminal harassment of Engel, but received a conditional pardon.

The court heard that Rabbi Spira resumed his harassment after that.

He claimed that he was acting on "a divine mission, a divine order" in trying to keep the couple together and later saving Engel from the life of an *agunah* (woman without a religious divorce).

Starting in 2004, Rabbi Spira called and wrote repeatedly to Engel including a 71-page letter after the couple had received a civil divorce, which warned her that she was still married according to Judaism.

Engel testified that, from the outset, she told him not to meddle in her personal life. He did stop contacting her between 2006 and 2012, but then resumed.

In September 2015, Engel filed a complaint with the police and Rabbi Spira was charged with criminal harassment. During his trial in November 2016, he underwent a psychiatric evaluation and was declared fit to stand trial.

He was convicted in November 2018, but was granted a pardon with conditions, notably an interdiction against contacting Engel or her family.

After Engel's ex-husband remarried, Rabbi Spira advised her that she was now in a bigamous marriage and was imprisoned in that former union because her former spouse had not granted her a *get*, a Jewish divorce decree.

As Dufour's judgment describes, he even suggested that Engel live with her ex-husband and his new wife and become a "co-spouse" in a "sanctified bigamous family."

The Palais de Justice in Montreal.
WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/JEAN GAGNON PHOTO

Because her ex-husband had initially refused to give Engel a *get*, Rabbi Spira held that his eventual consent to the divorce had been made "under constraint" and was therefore invalid.

He went even further, claiming it was his "religious duty" to warn any man Engel saw that he believed she was still married, in his interpretation of Judaism.

Dufour's judgment states that Rabbi Spira believed that "because, according to his religious convictions, it is better that a man commits suicide than put a married women in an adulterous situation."

In her civil suit, Engel said that she has lived in fear of Rabbi Spira, particularly his speaking about her personal affairs with others. She noted that at his criminal trial he had maintained that he still believed her divorce was invalid

She felt that a Sword of Damocles endlessly hung over her head.

Judge Dufour decided her fears are justified.

He wrote: "The freedom of religion is not absolute. (Rabbi Spira) cannot impose his belief or infringe the rights and freedoms, including religious freedom, of others. The right to interpret and live according to religious precepts as he understands them does not confer the right to infringe Mrs. Engel's sincere religious belief as to the validity of the *get* that she obtained, or to infringe on her right to live her life with who she chooses, without being denigrated." ■

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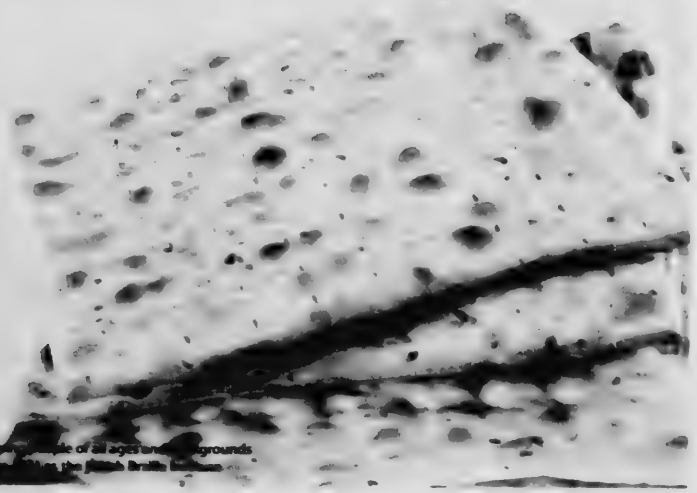

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El Al Ambassador and master chef

PAUL LUNGEN
plungen@thecjn.ca

Emmanuel Rosenzweig, 58, has been a pilot ever since he was an officer in the Israel Defence Force (IDF), but he's been cooking longer than that, and counter intuitively, both are linked.

Rosenzweig, who's no longer in the air force but who now flies Boeing 777s and 787s for El Al Israel Airlines, was a finalist in the MasterChef Israel competition in 2013 and was inspired to prepare a dish based on the rations IDF recruits share while training.

He was a reluctant participant in the competition. But once part of it, one of the judges, a well-known Israeli chef, tried to get him to draw on his experiences for an emotional inspiration for his culinary creations.

That wasn't necessarily Rosenzweig's style, but the pressure of the competition and the ingredients contestants were given, brought back memories of living in a tent during basic training with another recruit whose name he's forgotten.

The guy would receive packages of sweets from home that Rosenzweig recalls fondly. Unfortunately, he fell in action during the 1980s war in Lebanon. Rosenzweig was inspired to use some of the mess kit ingredients to concoct a sweet dish in his memory.

Rosenzweig advanced to the finals of the cooking competition and that story is among many he has when he addresses North American Jewish audiences.

Rosenzweig, along with his co-captain and members of his flight crew told their stories and commented on developments in Israel at Holy Blossom Temple on March 7. The event was part of the Beit Ha'am in the Skies — El Al Ambassadors program, which has been in existence since 2012.

A joint project of World Zionist Organization's (WZO) Department for Diaspora Affairs, in co-operation with the Canadian Zionist Federation (CZF) and El Al, the ambassadors appear in cities around the world to which the national carrier flies.

Rosenzweig joined the program about six months ago. According to WZO and CZF spokesperson Lior Sagi, the idea behind the program is that "people from different backgrounds share their personal stories and their insights about Israeli society."

Rosenzweig's story is an unusual one but speaks to Israeli values and history.

Rosenzweig's grandfather was noted philosopher Franz Rosenzweig, a thinker who examined what it means to be a Jew and how you live as one in the modern world, his grandson said.

Emmanuel Rosenzweig

His mother's family, however, were German Christians. His maternal grandfather served as a judge in prewar Germany and when the Nazis rose to power, he was compelled to join the party to retain his position. During the war he was offered a position as a judge in a military court, but turned it down. Instead, he was made an anti-aircraft gunner and assigned to Sicily, where he was killed.

His mother was shocked by the Nazis' murderous campaign against the Jews. A student of religions, she was attracted by the premise that all Jews are responsible for each other as "mutual guarantors," Rosenzweig said. She eventually converted to Judaism and moved to Israel.

Growing up in Hod HaSharon, Rosenzweig joined the air force where he served for 22 years as a pilot, flight officer and intelligence officer. He's been a pilot with El Al for 15 years.

From a young age he's been preparing food and has gotten quite good at it.

When MasterChef Israel was looking for a pilot who could cook, his friends recommended him to the show's producers.

He was reluctantly enticed onto the set and after meeting Eyal Shani, a famous Israeli chef, he got into the spirit of things. He had access to a well-stocked food truck and revelled in the energy and vibe on the set.

On one of the shows, participants were given a military kit and told to prepare a tasty meal. Remembering his tent mate, he prepared a sweet meal based on a halvah sauce, which the judges loved.

"At that point, I realized I cooked from emotion," he said. "Every dish starts with something I feel." ■

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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
CJN

Rise in anti-Semitism spurs local mother to act

DAVE GORDON
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

As anti-Semitic attacks were increasing around the world, Agnes Imani feared what could happen in Canada. As these clashes unfolded with startling regularity, and with a desire to see a safer world for her children, she wanted to do something, to be a part of the solution.

So she took it upon herself to take action. And in a big way.

She planned six conferences in the span of a month, and she did it all without connections in the community, without event planning experience and while caring for her three young children.

Earlier this year, she organized the Anti-semitism Toolbox, attracting hundreds of people to Chabad Romano, north of Toronto. She brought speakers from the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA), the UJA Federation of Greater Toronto, B'nai Brith Canada, Herut Canada, Hasbara Fellowships and others – an unprecedented event, where these groups for the first time spoke on the same platform.

And with that, nearly overnight, she became an in-demand Jewish activist.

Her journey to activism began at synagogue services last Yom Kippur, as she was reflecting upon the rise in anti-Semitism.

"I'm looking at the door, and I was afraid for the first time in my life that someone was going to walk in and attack," she said. "That's the same day there was an armed attack on a synagogue in Halle, Germany. The fear that I felt that day made me realize that something needed to be done."

She recalled being inspired by the sermon given by Rabbi Mendel Bernstein of Chabad Romano, on how a single person can change the world.

"I was going to make a difference by doing something – I didn't know what, but something."

The turning point for her was the spate of attacks in New York around Hanukkah, when she leapt to action to create her organization - Jews Against Antisemitism Canada. Its purpose was to fill what she believed to be a void in educational programming.

"I founded this toolbox because I was afraid for my children's future, and I felt that nothing of relevance was being done to educate us, as a community, or to make us feel secure and prepared, in the event of an ... anti-Semitic attack," Imani said.

Agnes Imani

She designed the series to cover a variety of topics – including learning about anti-Semitism, self-defence, campus hate and Zionism.

Developing the program from scratch was "very difficult," especially given her lack of connections in the Jewish community. Speakers were found using Google.

"I just kept calling and emailing, until they paid attention to me. I got one on board, then I got the second on board and then it just snowballed from there," she said. "I started from the ground up, and I did it all on my own, organizing it, distributing flyers, promoting it on social media, setting up the chairs."

The result was an "excited and empowered" room of attendees. "They told me something like that was lacking, and had to be done. I think it inspired them to want to also stand up, and make a difference in the community, and fight anti-Semitism."

Since that time, organizations in other parts of Canada have sought her assistance to plan similar events. "I'm full of hope, because I see that communities do want to take action. They just don't know what to do. I'm inspired to help change that."

Since entering the activism fold, she is often asked how to best fight anti-Semitism.

"What I've heard from a lot of people is that they don't want to come to a lecture and hear that there is anti-Semitism. They know there is. It's about what can they do, teach your children to be proud Jews and proud Zionists, don't be afraid to show your Jewishness; speak up and educate others about the Jewish people," she said.

"If you don't have facts, you can't win the argument. We all need to learn the history of Israel, and of the Jews. If we don't have that, then we never win the battle." ■

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The mental health crisis on campuses

Jewish agencies are working hard to help post secondary students deal with the stressful environment they face daily

ELYSE TYTEL
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

There is a mental health crisis on campus that is overwhelming the resources of most university and college counselling centres, leaving a dangerous void for some 25,000 Jewish post-secondary students in Canada.

Today, one in three university-aged students experiences mental health disabilities that affect their everyday life, according to the World Health Organization International College Student Initiative. The number of students on college and university campuses with identified mental health disabilities has more than doubled over the past five years.

Suicide is now the second leading cause of death among young adults aged 15-34, according to the Public Health Agency of Canada. Schools are struggling to keep up with the demand for mental health services. University is a time of great change and uncertainty for students.

For Jewish students, the threat of anti-Semitism and the growing presence of anti-Israel campaigns on campus can add fuel to the fire, creating a more stressful environment.

Josh B, a third-year McGill University student in Montreal (all sources were granted anonymity) says there is a definite vibe of anti-Israel sentiment on campus.

"BDS (boycott, divestment and sanctions movement) is the hip, cool thing to do," he said. "Opposition to that is kind of like being a social outcast in a way."

While he says nobody feels "like there's an assault on Jewish students," he doesn't generally "out" himself as Jewish. "It's not the unwillingness to have a conversation," he adds, "it's more like, maybe that's going to look bad on me and maybe that will affect how the person marking my work looks at me."

That sentiment is echoed by Sofie K., a third-year student in Halifax, who told *The CJN* about an incident at the beginning of last semester, where a dispute in class with her professor got a little heated.

After commenting on the negative way in which he was discussing western Judeo-Christian values, and pointing out that "the term itself is being discussed by some Jews as a form of erasure of the violence against us caused by Christians," Sophie told her professor she would appreciate if he stopped using the term. "He started defending himself, refusing to change it, raising his voice." She, too, felt uncomfortable outing herself as a Jewish student.

Providing effective support for mental health challenges is one of the most pressing issues on campuses today. The number of students who need treatment far exceeds the resources of most counselling centres, resulting in a substantial unmet need for mental health treatment. At schools across the country, waitlists for a therapist can range from three weeks to three months. And that's for the students who actually seek help.

While universities and colleges are playing catch up, Jewish agencies and organizations have heard the call and are working to help. New initiatives from familiar faces on campus like Hillel and Chabad in addition to Jewish Addiction Community Services (JACS) are helping to identify students in crisis and make sure they don't fall through the cracks.

"We're in crisis here, so any organization that can put forward something that is going to attract the kids and bring them to a place where they can get help, discuss with someone who is knowledgeable and find each other to help support each other is critical," says Leanne Matlow, cognitive behavioural therapy counsellor and founder of Mental Health Empowerment Day.

Hillel Ontario, whose coverage area includes nine universities with some 14,000 Jewish students, is one of the organizations with whom Matlow has worked.

"Hillel is trying to do some things because sometimes those are the places where the kids are going and they need to talk to somebody who might be able to help them access services," she says. It offers a variety of wellness programs on campus, including meditation and yoga, stress buster programs, visits from therapy dogs and seminars.

Beverly Shimansky, the chief campus and engagement officer at Hillel Ontario, says the issues on campus are only increasing, presenting a challenging situation for their staff. "We are thinking critically about how to create programs that aren't just social but speak to the need of students who are feeling isolated."

It used to be just about getting students to come to a program, she says, but "it isn't just about that. It's about bringing people together... when people are often feeling very alone." Across campuses, she says, Hillel staff are seeing students struggling with stress, anxiety and depression, including some who may physically harm themselves.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Anti-Israel students staged a protest in 2015 at McMaster University. FACEBOOK PHOTO

A pro-Nazi poster found at the University of British Columbia in 2017.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Hillel professionals are trained to be good listeners, Shimansky says. "We want to make sure that they are trusting us to share and open up because they might not go to anybody else and their parents aren't necessarily there to see the signs of a student who hasn't showered, or hasn't eaten, or who looks dishevelled."

But, she cautions, Hillel professionals are not clinically trained, at least not yet. Some 40 staff are set to take part in Hillel International's pilot launch of Kognito, an interactive simulation program that teaches front line workers how to recognize the signs of emotional distress, initiate a conversation and refer those in need to support services.

Mental health is being taken more seriously at Chabad Lubavitch, according to Rabbi Chalom Loeub of the Chabad Jewish Student Centre of Vancouver who covers the University of British Columbia and several other universities and colleges in Vancouver. Rabbi Loeub says he, too, is noticing more people who need help dealing with mental health issues. He has also received training through a number of Chabad seminars on how to identify those in need.

Jack K., a third-year McGill student, attends Friday night dinners at Chabad in Montreal and participates in a study group. "It's nice to have a familiar community that is very welcoming, where you feel very comfortable, especially in a new city," he says.

For Josh B., another student, going to Chabad for Friday night dinner is very much a de-stresser. Chabad "is sticking to basics," he says, "which I think in a way can alleviate some of those [mental health] issues."

"Chabad provides a consistent open space for students to come and feel at home, to get the stuff that they would get at home every Friday night."

> *How do people cope with their mental stress?*

While programs by Jewish organizations like Hillel and Chabad attract some Jewish students, they don't appeal to everyone who is feeling disconnected.

Sofie K., who struggles with mental health issues, says she has shied away from events in the Jewish community. "It felt very social, it's busy," she says, "and it's loud."

The culture on campus is an issue as well, she admits. After a crisis last year where both her mental and physical health declined, she found administrators and professors less then accommodating and felt pressured, "having to choose between 'toughing it out' and going into class versus taking care of myself and risking having to deal with the repercussions of that."

JACS's Courage to Change (C2C) program is one of the new Jewish mental health programs on campus, and it's hoping to help catch any students that might fall through the cracks. It was established in memory of philanthropists Honey and Barry Sherman by an anonymous donor, and while JACS may not be the first Jewish agency you think of when it comes to dealing with the mental health crisis on campus, Ita Tobis, the group's director of campus programming, notes that "addiction and mental health are so closely intertwined."

"How do people cope with their mental stress?" she asks. "Binging on Netflix, binge drinking – all the things that we consider to be maladaptive and coping in terms of addiction." Tobis says you have to become an addiction and mental health agency if you are moving onto campus. It's important for students to have a Jewish organization that is culturally and spiritually sensitive so that they are "talking to someone who gets it – like exams and holidays overlapping and dealing with the anxiety in that."

While other Jewish organizations have the same primary goals, JACS adds in-house resources, such as individual counselling, support groups, even free services and sliding scale therapy, for students. In collaboration with other Jewish organizations, Tobis says, JACS is running a variety of programs across nine campuses in Ontario including workshops for students, professional development training for campus staff, panel discussions, student leader/peer training, webinars and mental health weekends.

Specifically, Tobis says JACS programs focusing on consent, anxiety workshops and study "jams" with therapists on hand are some of the ways they are accessing students. While C2C is only available in Ontario, plans are in place to expand to Montreal and Vancouver and eventually nationally and internationally.

In the meantime, JACS is compiling impact reports to track its success in engaging students, and continues to collaborate with other, not necessarily Jewish, organizations that have developed successful ways to engage students in order to both share best practices and learn from one another.

One such organization is Stella's Place Young Adult Mental Health in Toronto, which sees some 1,500 young people a year. Stella's Place partners young adults and professionals to provide a collaborative, innovative model of mental health services including peer support, clinical, online, employment, wellness, and recovery services, according to Donna Green, founder and chairperson.

Green says transitions can be overwhelmingly challenging for young people. "(They) have a different set of challenges than 30 years ago, in finding work, in finding connection, in finding themselves."

Recognizing the lack of places for those between 16 and 29 years old to find help for their mental health issues, Stella's Place partners with clinicians and peers to provide help in a number of ways, including a once-a-week mental health walk-in clinic to combat the waitlists many students face when looking for help, and Bean Bag Chat, an app where young people can get individual support from peer support staff online. (The app is currently only serving those in the Greater Toronto Area.)

According to mental health advocates, when it comes to finding ways to deal with the crisis, one size does not fit all. You need to employ different models to serve different students with different types of mental disorders. For some, telephone counselling works, while for others, Internet-based clinical tools may be helpful. Most organizations agree that collaboration and sharing of resources is the only way forward.

Students, through whom much of the push for change is coming, may be less inclined to attach stigma to their mental health issues. "People are taking mental health and mental disorders just as they would a physical disorder," says Jack K. "Like, if you broke your ankle, your doctor wouldn't tell you to just walk it off. These things are real." ■

INTERNATIONAL

Gantz aiming to form 'patriotic government'

JACOB MAGID
JERUSALEM

Blue and White Chairman Benny Gantz vowed on Monday to cobble together a coalition "within days" after Israel's President Reuven Rivlin tasked the centrist alliance leader with forming a government in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

"I give you my word: I will do everything to establish within days – as few as I can – a national government, one that is as patriotic and as broad as possible," Gantz said in an address from the President's Residence in Jerusalem.

He specified that the government he would form would "protect the interests of the residents of Judea and Samaria [West Bank] and the Arab citizens of Israel, of the residents of the periphery and those in the centre."

"A government that I'll lead will help Israeli society recover from the coronavirus, as well as the virus of schism and hatred," he continued.

Gantz phoned the leaders of the Labor-Gesher-Meretz and Yisrael Beytenu parties shortly before receiving the mandate to form the next government and told Amir Peretz and Avigdor Liberman that he is committed to forming as broad a government as possible to serve all Israeli citizens, the party says in a statement.

Gantz said repairing Israel's healthcare system would be a top priority of his government. Commenting on reports that medical staff in Israel has been battling the coronavirus with insufficient protection gear and supplies, the Blue and White chairman said, he "sincerely hoped" they were "purely a rumour and not a managerial omission."

He vowed that his government would discuss the "lessons [that must be] learned and the urgent need to restore the public medical system in Israel."

Gantz then appealed to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who ran a blistering campaign against the Blue and White leader over his willingness to co-operate with the majority-Arab Joint List party.

Avoiding a handshake metaphor in the social-distancing days of the coronavirus, Gantz said, "I extend my elbows to all the elected factions in the Knesset, including Benjamin Netanyahu, and urge them to put aside the devastating verbal weapons and baseless hatred" in order to join him.

"I've always wanted [a] unity [government]," Gantz continued, "unity that comes not at the expense of Israeli democratic and state values."

Head of the Blue and White party Benny Gantz, right, with Yisrael Beytenu leader Avigdor Liberman on March 9. TOMER NEUBERG/FLASH90 PHOTO

The remark appeared to be a shot at Netanyahu, who has been accused of using the coronavirus to avoid standing trial on corruption charges. The opening of that hearing had been slated for Tuesday, but at 1 a.m. on Sunday, the justice minister instituted a "state of emergency" over the court system that led to the delay of Netanyahu's trial until May 24.

"The time has come for fewer empty words, and more great deeds. It's time to put boycotts and swords aside and reconnect all tribes of Israel, all the citizens of Israel. We will beat the coronavirus. We will win against the hatred. Our hope has not yet been lost," Gantz concluded, quoting a line from the country's national anthem.

The ceremonial tapping of Gantz to form the government came hours after Rivlin hosted the Blue and White leader along with Netanyahu for a three-way summit Sunday evening in an effort to encourage the two men to form an emergency unity government amid the coronavirus outbreak.

Signifying his intention to begin negotiations immediately, Rivlin also invited the heads of the Likud and Blue and White negotiating teams to be present. Following the meeting, Netanyahu and Gantz released a joint statement saying that they had both "thanked the president of the state for inviting them to the joint meeting" and that "the two agreed that negotiating teams would meet soon."

> "

Benny Gantz,
Blue and White leader

Earlier Sunday, Netanyahu went public with a pair of alternative offers for a unity government with Gantz, urging the de facto opposition chairman to choose either to serve under him in a six-month emergency government or replace him after two years as part of a four-year rotational coalition.

Rivlin, after September's election, proposed a unity government between the two, with Netanyahu serving as prime minister for some six months before being replaced by Gantz. While both took a stab at forming a government, neither succeeded, leading to the elections in March, the third in under a year.

Rivlin's proposal this time was based on the previous offer, but reportedly gives Netanyahu a full year as prime minister before handing the baton to Gantz, according to the Kan public broadcaster.

Immediately before the Sunday evening meeting, Rivlin announced that he would task Gantz with forming a government after the Blue and White leader received the endorsement of a majority of Knesset members.

His announcement came shortly after Liberman joined the Joint List and Labor-Gesher-Meretz parties in endorsing Gantz for prime minister. With the nod given by Liberman during consultations with Rivlin, Gantz picked up 61 of 120 recommendations, compared to Netanyahu's 58 endorsements.

Netanyahu's Likud won 36 Knesset seats in the March election compared to Blue and White's 33, but the Likud leader's right-wing bloc again failed to muster a parliamentary majority.

Liberman's backing for Gantz marked an unlikely alliance between the hawkish ex-defence minister, who has long condemned Arab lawmakers as "terrorist sympathizers," and the predominantly Arab Joint List, with both aiming to unseat Netanyahu.

On Monday, Gantz also phoned Defence Minister Naftali Bennett, a member of Netanyahu's right-wing bloc, and invited him to meet and told him he is willing to assist him in his position as much as needed at this time.

Bennett, who heads the national-religious Yamina party, responded that he won't meet with Gantz until the Blue and White chief renounces the support of the majority-Arab Joint List, a statement from the defence minister said.

The Yamina leader also called on Gantz to immediately join a "national emergency government" led by Netanyahu to deal with the coronavirus outbreak, "after which the political system will return to the present situation."

Bennett was appointed as defence minister by Netanyahu in November, a move members of the premier's Likud party have acknowledged was aimed at keeping him from joining a Gantz-led coalition after the previous round of elections. ■

Times of Israel / Timesofisrael.com

Schools shuttered as COVID-19 cases climb

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF
JERUSALEM

On Monday, Israel's Health Ministry reported an additional 42 cases of the novel coronavirus in Israel, bringing the total number of confirmed infections up to 255.

The majority have light symptoms, while 13 are listed in moderate condition and five are seriously ill, the ministry said, adding that 8,325 tests have been carried out.

Another four people no longer display any symptoms and are recuperating, according to the ministry.

Tens of thousands more were in quarantine after either travelling to countries with high incidences of the virus or coming into contact with a carrier. The ministry said 50,337 were in self-isolation. Due to the relatively long time it takes for symptoms to develop, health officials believe that more people have contracted the virus, but haven't yet been diagnosed.

The Israel Defence Forces said a fifth soldier has been diagnosed with COVID-19.

"An epidemiological study was conducted, and all those who were in close contact with him have been sent to home quarantine. Additional people who were in contact with him are being located now," the military said.

Meanwhile, the swearing in of the 23rd Knesset was set to begin on Monday. In place of the usual mass swearing-in ceremony, the Knesset swore in lawmakers in 10 rounds of three lawmakers each, adhering to Health Ministry orders prohibiting gatherings of more than 10 people in an enclosed space.

Doctors complained on Monday that they had insufficient protective equipment for treating patients with the deadly virus, after 19 medical professionals contracted the disease.

"For days we have been warning of oversights, of protocols and instructions for checks that do not fit with the situation ... all of these are leading to infiltrations, ticking time bombs in the wards, where [patients] are being received by teams lacking protective equipment, who are becoming infected and infecting others," Dr. Rey Biton, of the medical residents organization Mirsham, wrote on Facebook.

An anonymous senior official in the Health Ministry criticized his agency for what he described as a failure to ensure a sufficient supply of protective equipment – masks, gloves and hazmat suits – for such an outbreak.

"It is confounding what the Health Ministry has been doing in recent years. If it hasn't been preparing for things like this ... what has it been doing?" he asked the Walla news site.

Men at morning prayers keep their distance from one another as part of the measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, at a synagogue in Gush Etzion on March 16.
GERSHON ELINSON/FLASH90 PHOTO

Israel shuttered schools and most businesses over the past week in a bid to stem the spread of the virus in order to avoid overwhelming the country's health infrastructure.

Similar efforts are underway around the world, especially in the hardest-hit nations of China, Italy, Iran, South Korea and Spain.

However, ultra-Orthodox religious leaders on Sunday night said haredi schools would remain open Monday, but said they would divide the students into groups of 10 to avoid the spread of COVID-19.

Netanyahu met with the chief rabbis and other ultra-Orthodox representatives on Sunday evening to convince segments of the haredi community to shutter their schools, after they defied Health Ministry directives designed to contain the virus. All other schools in the country have been shut down by the state to stem the spread.

Italy, the worst-hit European country, reported its biggest day-to-day increase in infections on Sunday – 3,590 more cases in a 24-hour period – for a total of almost 25,000.

Dalia Samhouri, a regional official with the World Health Organization, said both Iran and Egypt, two of the most populous countries in the Mideast, were likely underreporting cases because infected people can still show no visible symptoms. Iran said it had nearly 14,000 virus cases and 724 deaths, while Egypt has reported 110 cases, including two fatalities.

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Opinion

Israel bounces between election and coronavirus

Gerald Steinberg

Israelis went to polls for the third time in a year on March 2, just as the reality of the coronavirus threat was beginning to sink in. The combination created an eerie tableaux, including special polling stations set up so that over 5,000 people then in quarantine could dash in, vote, and run back. It was as if fate had conspired to maximize the uncertainty of our lives far beyond any reasonable threshold.

And then came the election results – initially Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appeared to have done better than expected, and would be able to form a government, irrespective of the imminent beginning of his corruption trial. But when the votes were all tallied, the country was gridlocked again, and the anti-Netanyahu seats in the Knesset were slightly greater. Once again, we face complete political uncertainty accompanied by intense backroom wheeling and dealing. And some people began to talk about a fourth election in September.

In parallel, the number of COVID-19 cases are growing slowly, and as Israel tried to stay ahead of the contagion curve, the country gradually closed its doors to the world. Ben Gurion airport is largely empty – every day looks like Yom Kippur – with only a few flights daily to allow tourists to leave, and to bring home Israelis. Thousands of El Al employees were placed on leave until further notice, and the entire tourist industry was frozen. What all of the wars failed to accomplish was done by the fear of the corona pandemic.

For the most part, the government has continued to function, with Netanyahu still very much at the helm. Almost every day, ministers and experts meet and issue new instructions, and top officials from the Ministry of Health, often accompanied by the prime minister, are making public statements and answering questions in a remarkable display of openness.

At some points, particularly when the question of extending quarantine requirements from Europe to the United States was being debated, there were open and substantive differences of opinion between the officials. As a result, the public was exposed to the unknowns and difficulties, and were prepared for future scenarios.

In the middle of all of this drama, we tried to celebrate Purim – which lasts for most of the week in Israel (based on the Book of Esther, walled cities, such as Jerusalem, celebrate a day after the rest of the country). Children still dressed up and some parties were held, but the shadow of the virus was everywhere. And as soon as the celebrations in Jerusalem ended, the government banned all gatherings of more than 100 people, including sporting events, concerts and theatrical performances. Synagogues announced staggered times for prayers to avoid going beyond the limit. On the next day, the schools were closed, shutting down the country even more.

Economically, Israel is in the same boat as other developed countries. Many people will be able to work from home, but many other sectors will be hit hard. As trade routes are disrupted and the global crisis takes its toll, Israel will also be hit badly. The government has pledged to help businesses survive the impacts, and to keep the planes flying (if necessary, under Air Force control) with products destined for export markets, to the degree that these continue to function.

For the most part, Israelis have shown remarkable co-operation with these edicts, and there were few signs of panic. Perhaps the experiences provided in past wars prepared the public for this kind of self-discipline. Netanyahu is given credit by some of his harshest critics for clear and effective leadership. There is also discussion of an emergency government which he would expect to lead.

How the politics and the pandemic will play out is of course unknowable. Most of the efforts focus on getting through the day and week, and beyond that, hoping to arrive at the Passover holidays in reasonably good shape, under the circumstances. ■

Health Ministry shuts down schools and malls

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF
JERUSALEM

Israel's Health Ministry sent out a message overnight last Saturday clarifying a raft of new regulations announced hours earlier by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to combat the spread of the coronavirus, including banning gatherings of more than 10 people.

The message emphasized that all educational institutions would be shut down starting Sunday, regardless of the number of children per classroom, among them daycare centres – including home daycares – special education, youth movements and after-school programs.

It also said that, save for supermarkets and pharmacies, all malls would be closed. Restaurants and hotel dining rooms will also be shuttered – aside from those that provide takeout – along with bars, pubs and dance clubs.

The Health Ministry said gyms, pools, water and amusement parks, zoos and petting zoos, bathhouses and ritual baths for men, beauty and massage salons, event and conference venues, public boats and cable cars, and heritage sites would have to close as well.

It highlighted that the ban against congregating in groups larger than 10 extended to gatherings for religious activities – the minimum number of men for an Orthodox prayer quorum, or "minyan," is 10 – and mandated that people participating in such activities maintain a distance of at least two metres from one another.

The directives also included a limit on visiting nursing homes for more than one person at a time – and preferably limited to a regular caregiver.

It said that, "for now," people will still be allowed to go to work – though workplaces were encouraged to continue to prepare to facilitate work from home – but must maintain a distance of two metres from one another.

The Health Ministry also said Israelis should refrain from travelling in a car in groups larger than two and recommended that people refrain as much as possible from using public transportation.

The Jerusalem municipality said in a statement Saturday night that it would adhere to the new regulations, noting that public libraries would remain open for lending only, while limiting the number of people allowed to enter to 10 at a time. It confirmed that all restaurants and entertainment venues would be closed, save for kitchens that offered takeout services, which would be limited to 10 workers. It also said its own workers would begin to work from home, other than field workers who will continue as usual.

The city of Tel Aviv put out a similar statement confirming that all public activities would be shut down, including on the beaches, where there would be no lifeguard services. It added, however, that municipal workers would continue to provide sanitation and security services, while limiting enforcement of bylaws to severe cases.

Earlier, Netanyahu and government officials announced the shutdown of all leisure businesses and activities throughout the country, with the premier impressing upon the public the need to "adopt a new way of life" for the coming weeks and possibly months as the country deals with the new coronavirus – and particularly underlining a guiding principle of individuals maintaining a distance of at least two metres from others at all times.

Stores at the Dizengoff Centre in Tel Aviv are empty on March 15, as the government ordered all malls to close.
TOMER NEUBERG/FLASH90 PHOTO

Sunday morning saw public life further diminished, with the closure of all cafes, restaurants, hotels, malls, movie theatres, gyms, event halls and the like. But Netanyahu stressed that supermarkets, pharmacies, banks and other essential service providers would continue to function.

"This is a battle for public health," Netanyahu said at a press conference from the Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem. "We are at war with an invisible enemy…We are adjusting as things develop. The situation is dynamic." But, he said, "we can beat it."

Comparing the situation several times to a state of war, the premier said it was imperative for Israelis to change gear and "adopt a new way of life" for the near future, noting that many Israelis appeared not to be heeding officials' calls to avoid physical contact and displays of affection, but stressing that this was crucial for the nation to curb the spread of COVID-19.

The two most important issues, he said, were "personal hygiene" and keeping distance from each other. "A distance of two metres. This will protect us. It is very hard but it will help us stop infection."

He stressed that authorities "will continue to ensure crucial services to the market. First and foremost on food – because there was a rush on supermarkets. We have more than enough stocks…including for Pass over. There is no justification for [panic]."

Over the weekend Israelis flooded supermarkets to stock up amid fears the country could enter a lockdown and goods could run out – though officials repeatedly assured the public that there was no such danger.

Notably – raising major privacy concerns and prompting accusations of mass surveillance – Netanyahu also said the government would move to use invasive digital monitoring measures to track the movements of sick individuals, which had previously been employed against terrorism.

To curb the spread of the virus in the country, all Israelis returning from overseas are required to quarantine at home for 14 days. Non-Israeli nationals were barred from entering the country as of March 12, unless they can demonstrate an ability to self-quarantine for two weeks. ■

Times of Israel / Timesofisrael.com

Conspiracy theory blames Jews for coronavirus spread

ERIC CORTELLESSA
WASHINGTON

The coronavirus pandemic has upended the world. China instituted a lockdown on tens of millions of its people. Israel set drastic restrictions on workplaces and public gatherings. Canada has imposed travel restrictions and warned residents to avoid unnecessary travel, and the United States on Friday declared a national emergency, all in an attempt to contain the spread of the novel virus.

As the infectious disease – with no vaccine or specific cure – has spread across the globe, a new conspiracy theory has been brewing on the fringes of society: The Jews are behind it.

According to Alex Friedfeld, a researcher with the Anti-Defamation League's (ADL) Centre on Extremism, extremists began promulgating the notion in January that the coronavirus was created by a cabal of Jews, around the time the virus was first being detected.

"The most popular conspiracy theory is that Jews are using this virus as a means for profit," Friedfeld told the *Times of Israel*. "They are saying Jews manufactured it and are going to take advantage of the markets collapse through insider trading."

Such ideas have been percolating not only on extremist platforms like *Telegram* and *Gab*, he said, but through posts on mainstream platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, where memes and statements have been posted regularly.

"What's interesting to me was I started to see these same conspiracy theories – and anti-Semitic ones in particular – pop-up on social media," he said.

In some cases, these theories have also appeared on state-sponsored television networks, like in Turkey.

One guest on Turkish television said "Jews, Zionists have organized and engineered the novel coronavirus as a biological weapon just like bird flu" to "design the world, seize countries and neuter the world's population."

Beyond spreading the falsity that coronavirus is a Jewish invention (some have referred to it as a bio-weapon), some white nationalists have also celebrated the disease outbreak as an opportunity for their cause.

"They are saying it could destroy society completely and, on the ashes of it, they could build their white ethno-state, which is what they want," said Friedfeld. "This is maybe the virus that will break society, and they hope they will have a chance to build upon the remains."

Another idea being spread is that the coronavirus is a conspiracy between Jews and Zionists and the so-called Deep State to take down U.S. President Donald Trump.

"It's a lot of these plays off of old tropes and stereotypes that are being repacked and deployed again just with this new storyline," Friedfeld said.

The ADL researcher said anti-Semites have cited the Jewish Brazilian official who tested positive for COVID-19 and met with the American leader when Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro visited Mar a Lago earlier this month. ■

Times of Israel / Timesofisrael.com

Analysis

Israel's veteran prime minister is thriving in this crisis

David Horowitz
JERUSALEM

After hours of fevered speculation, innumerable false reports flashing out across social media, and a post-Shabbat run on supermarkets nationwide, the raft of new measures to try to fight the coronavirus pandemic announced by Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Saturday, March 14, was dramatic indeed closing down Israel's shopping malls, bars, restaurants, cinemas, health clubs and much more

But it was still less drastic than had been widely anticipated

Netanyahu and his colleagues, speaking at a delayed presentation to the nation that hinted at disagreements between various officials, did not declare a state of emergency. They did not impose a lockdown, barring Israelis from leaving their homes. They did not shut down the private sector.

But they emphatically reserved the right to do any of those things in the near future. And Moshe Bar Siman-Tov, the Health Ministry director-general who is widely believed to have been pushing for a complete private sector shutdown, stated adamantly immediately after the live broadcast that more stringent measures will indeed be imposed "in the next few days."

With this virus infecting exponentially, Bar Siman-Tov said, "you can lose control in a second, and then there's no going back. Look at Italy."

As of this writing late Saturday night, Israel – its borders essentially closed, its gatherings limited, some 40,000 citizens in self-quarantine – has avoided even a single death from the coronavirus, and is aware of "only" some 200 people who are infected with it.

Had those numbers been markedly higher, Siman-Tov intimated, greater restrictions on public movement and social

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at a press conference about the coronavirus in Jerusalem on March 11. FLASH90 PHOTO

interaction would already be in force. If those numbers do go significantly higher, some of the mooted but thus far rejected measures will doubtless come into force.

Many of the specific new restrictions introduced last night were set out not by Netanyahu but by Shai Babad, the director-general of the Treasury, in a single breathless sentence. Not only would school closures announced last week be extended to the entire educational network, but the entire entertainment and cultural sector was shutting down from Sunday morning, Babad said, speedily specifying malls, cinemas, hotels, weddings, group trips, conferences, health clubs and more. Doubtless a more orderly presentation of what is being closed will follow, and be made available online.

What Netanyahu chose to highlight was the new reality of "social distancing" that lies at the core of Israel's battle against the virus. Having asked Israelis last week to stop kissing, hugging and shaking hands and generally "keep your distance" from each other, the prime minister now specified a two-metre minimum to prevent contagion.

The calculation that the virus, coughed or sneezed out, won't be able to leap that two-metre gap is central to the restrictions Israel is imposing, he said – restrictions that also now bar any gatherings of more than 10 people. The key in what he called "a war against an invisible enemy… is not to infect, and not to be infected." But, he indicated, even all these changes to the normal social routine might not be sufficient. "We are still learning about this virus," he stressed.

Maintain your hygiene, wash your hands, clean off surfaces, and stay those two metres apart, he stressed, and Israel will come through the worst pandemic in a century. Ignore those basics, he cautioned, "and it could get a lot worse before it gets better."

Netanyahu also announced that Israel will be using highly invasive digital tech to "locate the enemy," by which he meant track the movements of infected Israelis in order to test and impose quarantine where necessary on those with whom they have come into contact, and avoid having to send the entire nation into isolation. He said he had refrained from using this kind of technology in the civilian environment throughout his years of prime minister, but amid this crisis, the wider public interest required it, and thus he had obtained approval from the Justice Ministry.

He clarified that all essential services would continue to function, that supermarkets would stay open, so too pharmacies, banks and gas stations. In the private sector, he and his colleagues urged bosses to use their discretion not to compel workers to come in if not absolutely necessary; to do everything to ensure that two-metre distance.

Netanyahu has been briefing the nation almost nightly of late, peppering his remarks with mentions of this and that foreign leader who has complimented his policies, praising the public for its discipline, trying to deepen the sense of his indispensability to Israel's well-being the crucial asset his leadership rival Benny Gantz has been trying for a year to shatter.

Last Saturday, too, Netanyahu allowed himself to boast several times that the policies he has introduced these past few weeks have been "ahead of all other countries worldwide," and thus Israel currently has "one of the best situations in the world."

His handling of this crisis has indeed been widely praised, including from such unlikely sources as Ofer Eini, the former head of the nationwide Histadrut labour federation. A longtime foe of the prime minister's, Eini said in a television interview Saturday afternoon that Netanyahu's experience was self-evidently working to Israel's advantage as it grapples with the pandemic, and urged the prime minister's rivals to join him in a unity government.

Netanyahu reiterated a similar appeal Saturday night, and the Blue and White party of his main rival, former IDF chief Gantz, responded with wary assent provided, it said, that responsibilities are equally shared. But Gantz, who until a week ago was hoping he might somehow pull together a Knesset majority to supplant Netanyahu after March 2's third successive election deadlock, is now in no position to issue hardball demands.

Manifestly thriving in the crisis, Netanyahu is assuring Israelis that he and they are leading much of the world in battling a deadly, invisible enemy. "King Bibi," the "magician," to use two of his nicknames, was on the political ropes not many weeks ago. To what must be the intense frustration of his opponents, a global pandemic has enabled him to bounce back. His corruption trial may be due to begin soon, but the veteran prime minister isn't about to be dislodged, by Gantz or anybody else. ■

Times of Israel / Timesofisrael.com

New measure will allow Shin Bet to monitor cell phones

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

As part of its measures to combat the spread, Israel's government on Sunday approved a proposal to allow the Shin Bet security service to perform mass surveillance on Israelis' phones without requiring a court order, prompting major concerns over privacy and civil liberty violations.

The measure still requires final approval from the Knesset's subcommittee on clandestine services before it can be put into action.

The Prime Minister's Office said the Shin Bet will be limited in what data it collects and who within the government will have access to it. In addition, under the proposal, the agency will only be able to use the information in the fight against the coronavirus, and the power is scheduled to end 30 days after it is granted by the Knesset subcommittee.

Government officials stressed that the use of these tools, usually reserved for counterterrorism operations, was meant to save lives.

Yet the measure has faced criticism from human rights and privacy experts as effectively it means any person in Israel could come under surveillance by the Shin Bet, an organization with no public transparency requirements. The proposal also goes far beyond the monitoring efforts used by other countries in their fights against the coronavirus.

For most people, the coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. ■

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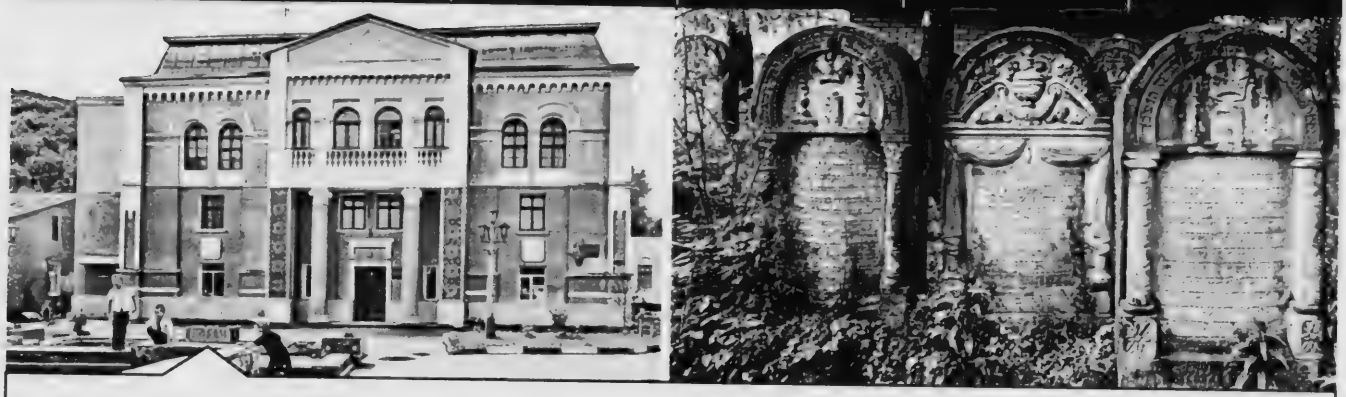
Jewish Life



Left: The Vyzhnytsia Culture Centre in western Ukraine, and below, the Okopowa Street Cemetery in Warsaw. DAVID KAUFMAN.

Photographing Europe's lost Jewish heritage

BARBARA SILVERSTEIN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Back in 1992, David Kaufman, an acclaimed photographer and an award-winning documentary filmmaker, was in Poland doing research for CBC television on Polish child survivors of the Holocaust.

His trip coincided with the discovery of a Jewish burial site near Warsaw. The tombstones of the former Jewish cemetery were lined up and standing vertically. "I was blown away by their beauty," he said. "I had never seen Jewish monuments so rich and ornate in calligraphy and iconography."

In 2007 he returned to Poland and over seven successive trips spanning nine years – he also visited Ukraine – Kaufman set out to photograph Jewish cemeteries, as well as prewar synagogues, and Jewish residential and communal buildings that had survived destruction by the Nazis.

An exhibition of these photographs, titled, *The Posthumous Landscape: Jewish Historical Sites in Poland and Western Ukraine*, is currently being shown at Congregation Darchei Noam.

Kaufman's large scale, highly detailed photographs give the viewer a glimpse of Jewish life in the cities and towns, where a sizeable part of the local population was Jewish.

His images document synagogues in disrepair and over-grown cemeteries along with functioning synagogues that have been beautifully restored and stately turn-of-the-century buildings that were built and formerly inhabited by Jews.

Ukraine has many Jewish sites, particularly cemeteries, but efforts to preserve them are limited. "The state of burial sites range from well-cared for to abandoned due to underfunding," Kaufman said.

He and other photographers document these Jewish sites to encourage preservation, however, he lamented that with the continual physical deterioration of these sites "the photographs will be all that remains."

The images in this current exhibit encompass places in Warsaw and Lodz in Poland, and Lviv, Vyzhnytsia and the Chernivtsi area in Ukraine. Lviv had been part of Poland between the two world wars.

Warsaw, once home to 375,000 Jews, has almost no Jewish landmarks, because the city was a battle ground during the Second World War. However, Kaufman pointed out that Okopowa Street Cemetery with over 225,000 burial sites and innumerable monuments is a treasure trove of Warsaw's Jewish "material history."

In contrast to Warsaw, parts of Lodz once inhabited by Jews, have not changed for 80 years, Kaufman said. "A significant percentage of the buildings in Baluty, the poor district at the heart of the former ghetto, remain intact and substantially unaltered since the conflict."

In Lodz he also photographed the palace and manufacturing compound of the Jewish textile magnate, Izrael Kalman Poznanski. He built factories and residences for his workers in the late 19th century. These buildings are intact and are now repurposed, as are so many of the area's former Jewish sites.

Kaufman also noted that the Jewish cemetery in Lodz is one of the largest in the world.

One of the most striking photographs on display is of a group of children playing outside Vyzhnytsia's cultural centre. This stately three-storey building was formerly the town's largest synagogue.

Before the war Vyzhnytsia or Vizhnitz in Yiddish – it's 75 kilometres west of Chernivtsi – was 90 per cent Jewish. Today there are no Jews there. The Vizhnitz dynasty, the second largest Hasidic sect in Israel, originated in this town.

In Lviv (known formerly as Lvov and Lemberg) one of Kaufman's subjects is a building with well-preserved commercial inscriptions in Yiddish. He said such Yiddish advertising is referred to as "ghost signs."

Originally from Montreal, Kaufman had has an impressive career as a documentary filmmaker. In addition to producing documentary segments for CBC's *The Journal* in the mid-1980s, he later produced and directed more than 50 documentary and investigative reports on a variety of issues for CBC's *The Fifth Estate*.

Kaufman became an independent filmmaker in 1999. Many of his films have Jewish themes.

Since 2010, his professional focus has been on photography. Over the years, he has had 16 solo photography shows.

Architectural photography has been an integral part of Kaufman's body of work since 1984. His subject matter has included cityscapes and period buildings in Toronto, Montreal and New York.

However, he is also the official photographer for Toronto's Ashkenaz Festival as well as KlezKanada, the annual week-long, summer Yiddish music and cultural festival in Quebec. ■

The Posthumous Landscape is on display at Congregation Darchei Noam (864 Sheppard Ave. W.) until April 16. Copies of all the prints in this exhibition are available for purchase. Kaufman can also lead guided tours of this exhibit for groups. He can be contacted at www.davidkaufmanphotography.com.

The Plot Against America is pertinent to this era

JOSEPH SERGE
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Philip Roth's acclaimed alternative-history novel about America under a pro-Nazi president during the Second World War, has been adapted into a six-part HBO series that premiered on March 16.

The Plot Against America was published in 2004, long before Donald Trump became president, but 2½ years after the infamous Charlottesville march with its "Jews will not replace us" chants, it is very prophetic.

Comparisons with modern-day America are inevitable. Like Trump, the president of the United States in *The Plot Against America* is a popular celebrity; in this case Charles Lindbergh, famous for his nonstop flight from New York to Paris in 1927.

The series begins in June 1940, shortly after the fall of Paris to the Nazis. Lindbergh is running in the U.S. election against incumbent President Franklin D. Roosevelt on a campaign of America First, a nationalist program that vows to keep America out of the war. He is pro-fascist, and an admirer of the Nazi regime. Like Trump, he speaks in short soundbites. While Trump speaks in tweets, Lindbergh delivers 41-word speeches, that repeat his main mantra that the election is a choice between "Lindbergh or war."

The Plot Against America focuses on the effects of this political climate on a working-class Jewish family in Newark, N.J., the Levins (changed from the book's Roths): Herman and Elizabeth, their two boys and Elizabeth's unmarried sister, Evelyn. The story, as one would expect, is very Jewish. Much of the family's discussions and arguments take place over Shabbat dinner, and their conversations are peppered with Yiddishisms such as *shaygetz*, *goyim*, *gonif*, *shlimazel* and *balabusta*.

Bubbling beneath Lindbergh's America First speeches is his blaming Jews for pressuring Roosevelt into joining the war. The Levins, like many other Jews, are aware of what's happening in Europe (Herman, played by Morgan Spector, is an avid viewer of the newsreels) and are naturally anxious. Their youngest son Philip is haunted by nightmares.

Herman Levin is doubtful that Lindbergh will win. "Roosevelt is a professional politician, a leader. Lindbergh is an airline pilot with opinions," he tells his neighbours. Yet, he worries about the anti-Semitism that is brewing around him. "If Lindbergh says it, every anti-Semite has permission."

John Turturro, right, shines as Rabbi Lionel Bengelsdorf.

The series advances several months with each episode. Lindbergh wins the election. We see shots of cemeteries desecrated with swastikas and anti-Semitic graffiti. Halls are decorated with red, white and blue banners and giant portraits of George Washington in true fascist style.

As time progresses, anti-Semitism becomes more prevalent and Jews become persecuted. On a holiday trip to Washington, D.C., the Levins are kicked out of their room because they are Jewish, and the FBI is following them because of the sympathies of their nephew Alvin, who joins the Canadian army. Herman's wife, Elizabeth (Zoe Kazan) suggests to her husband that they move to Canada.

John Turturro is the star, playing Lionel Bengelsdorf, a southern rabbi who is an apologist for Lindbergh. Evelyn (Winona Ryder) falls in love with Bengelsdorf, much to the Levins' disdain. "He's koshering Lindbergh," Herman says. Evelyn and Bengelsdorf get invited to White House state dinners, including one for German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop.

Rabbi Bengelsdorf is the prime mover behind Just Folk, a program that sends Jewish children to America's heartland to assimilate them. Evelyn convinces the Levins to send their oldest son there, and he returns a poster-boy recruiter for the program, calling his family "ghetto Jews."

The Plot Against America, adapted by David Simon (*Treme*, *The Wire*) is a timely series, full of parallelisms to what's going on in America and elsewhere. At six parts, it inevitably includes some digressions and unnecessary supporting characters, but for the most part stays faithful to the book. Fans of the novel would love this adaptation, but you don't have to have read it to enjoy this. ■

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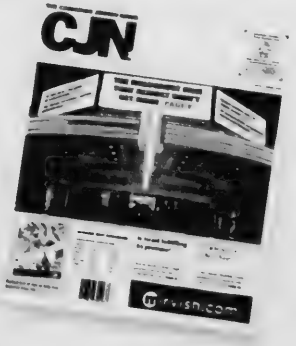

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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
MARCH 19, 2020

Shalva is an inspiring story of perseverance

MARTY LOCKSHIN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Shalva, an amazing Israeli success story, is a leader in the field of disability care and inclusion. The Hebrew word for "tranquillity," Shalva is also an acronym for *shichrur la-mishpachah velaveled ha-mugbal* (freedom for the family and for the disabled child), as it supports both disabled children and their families. After school, disabled children go to Shalva centres for treatments, activities and social interactions, thus giving them extra services while providing their families short respite from the challenge of dealing with a special needs child who requires near-constant attention.

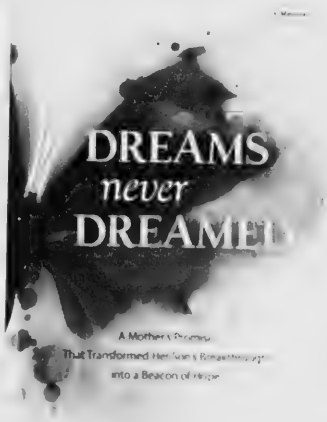
Shalva became famous recently when the talented "Shalva Band" almost won the competition to represent Israel at the prestigious Eurovision Song Contest. But Shalva's most important accomplishment is the day-to-day effect it has on Israeli families.

Rabbi Kalman Samuels's book, *Dreams Never Dreamed: A Mother's Promise that Transformed her Son's Breakthrough into a Beacon of Hope*, tells the fascinating story of how he and his wife, Malki, created Shalva after dealing with their own disabled child, Yossi. Shalva came to life without any significant assistance from the Israeli government, simply through the Samuels' impressive drive and sensitivity. The book goes into great detail (perhaps too much) about the challenges of fundraising for a multi-million-dollar project and the legal hurdles that the Samuels' went through dealing with NIMBY (not-in-my-backyard) neighbours. Rabbi Samuels and Malki Samuels's strength of character and determination shine throughout. (Part of Shalva's story was previously reported in this paper last June.)

The book also tells three other intriguing stories. The first is that of Rabbi Samuels's life. Born Kerry Samuels in Vancouver, he grew up in a traditional but not religious Jewish home. In the summer of 1970, after graduating high school and finishing one year on a full scholarship at the University of British Columbia, he flew overseas with the intention of improving his French by living with a family in France, but he began with a short trip to Israel that transformed his life. A haredi Jew invited him home for Shabbat, and then everything changed for him. Rabbi Samuels describes his wrenching decision to drop the rest of his university education and throw in his lot with haredi Judaism. He studied in a few yeshivot, eventually earning rabbinic ordination.

The story of the couples' second son, Yossi Samuels, who became seriously handicapped after receiving a tainted DPT (diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus) vaccination, is the next episode. Deaf and blind, Yossi also had serious neurological complications and was hyperactive. Rabbi Samuels recounts how he and his wife els and some very gifted educators dealt with Yossi's problems. How he had to learn what words were and how they could be used for communication is thrilling reading. He advanced amazingly, learning to read, write and speak. Often referred to as the "Israeli Helen Keller," Yossi Samuels is of superior intelligence and has a well-cultivated sense of humour. He has traveled the world, met with heads of state, and become a productive member of the work force.

The third story is of the Samuels' court case in Israel, suing the government for damages for not withdrawing the tainted vaccine batch quickly enough. Rabbi Samuels writes that even after reports of infants damaged by the vaccine started to come in to the Ministry of Health, the vaccine "remained in use, with their knowledge for a further six months ... Yossi, in fact, had been one of the last injected. Had responsible steps been taken in a timely manner, he and so many others would have been spared." The lawsuit also named Connaught Laboratories in Canada, manufacturer of the tainted pertussis element of the vaccine. (Years later, Connaught withdrew its pertussis vaccine from the market after losing a number of lawsuits in the United States.)

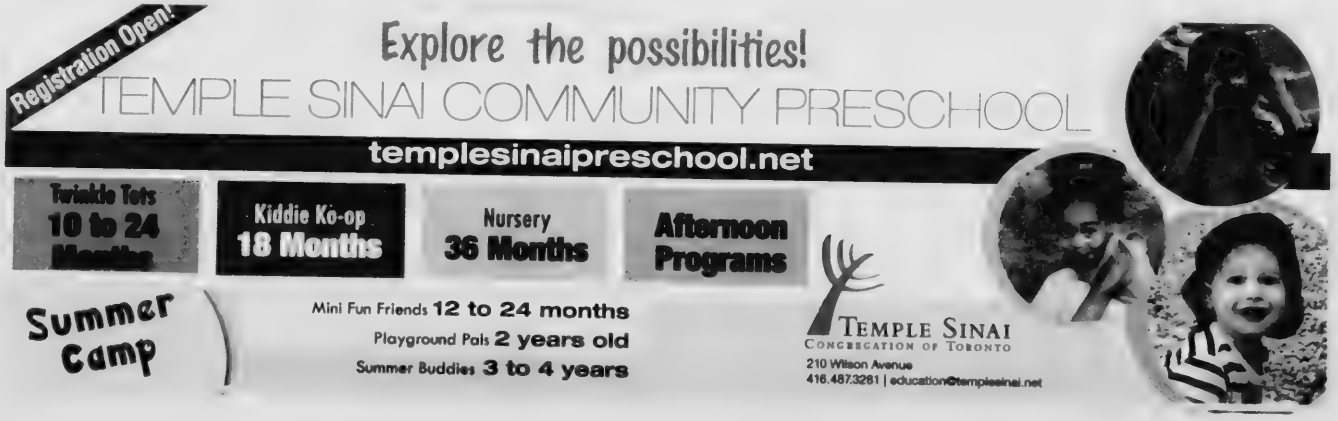


Dreams Never Dreamed: A Mother's Promise that Transformed her Son's Breakthrough into a Beacon of Hope
Kalman Samuels

Toby Press

The Israeli Ministry of Health went to great lengths to beat the lawsuit: instead of using the government's own lawyers, they hired (at public expense) the best tort law firm in Israel. They used many stalling tactics in the hope that the Samuels', who had limited resources, would give up. Many members of the Israeli medical establishment were also concerned that if the lawsuit succeeded, the country's immunization program might be jeopardized. Medical experts called by the government argued that Yossi must have been born deaf and blind, and that the vaccine was not to blame. According to Rabbi Samuels, this collusion of the medical establishment with "Big Pharma" began years before the lawsuit, when Yossi was still a baby. "It was clear that an order had been issued by someone powerful and highly placed to conceal these vaccine-related injuries." The expert medical witnesses called by the plaintiffs, the Samuels', were "shunned by their (Israeli) medical colleagues for this 'betrayal,'" but expert medical witnesses from abroad willingly testified on their behalf. The dramatic highlight of the trial was when Yossi Samuels himself took the stand.

I had trouble putting down *Dreams Never Dreamed*. Yossi Samuels's efforts to live a meaningful life against terrible odds, and Rabbi Kalman and Malki Samuels's effort to change the world to make this possible for him and to help other families in similar situations are very moving. Rabbi Samuels credits their success to divine intervention. It certainly is inspiring to learn how intelligent, determined and highly motivated people can take on a project and end up creating a new, more hopeful, reality. ■



Yiddish Corner

GERRY KANE
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ער מאַכט אַ תּל פֿון אַמעריקע!

גיט צו א וועלכן נאָמען איר ווילט. אונדזערע פֿאָר וועלכע היינט האָבן צו טאָן מיט דעם וואָרט "תּל" אַדער "טעל" וי מען שרייבט עס אָפּט אין אונדזער ייִדישן אויסלייג. איינער פֿון אונדזערע ליינער האָט מיר געשריבן אָן געשטעלט די פֿראַגע "פֿון וואַנען נעמט זיך דאָס וואָרט? איז עס ייִדיש, דייטש אַדער העברעיש?

דער ענטפֿער האָט אין זיך אַרבעאָאָנישע געשיכטע, פּסיכאָלאָגישע אייגנבליקן, און פֿאָלקסטומלעכע זאָגענישן. ס'איז א וואָרט מיט אימפּעט. דער תּל וואָס אונטוויקלט זיך אין אמעריקע און אין אַנדערע לענדער, זענען מיר יעדן סאָג ווען מיר קומן אַריין אין א ציוויליזירטן אָדער אורף דער סעלעוויזיע.

אָבער די פֿראַגע איז פֿון וואַנען שטאַמט דאָס וואָרט? וואָס איז איר ייחוס?

ערשטסטנס: א שליסל צו פֿאַרשטיין דאָס יידישע פּנים פֿון וואָרט. תּל־אָביב האָט מען געבויט אויף אַ היסטאָרישן תּל.

"תּל" איז אן אראבישׁ וואָרט וואָס האָט א טיפּע מיינונג צו ארבעאָלאָגן. די ניין איבער נאָרע־וועלט און פֿרובירן נעפֿינען דעם "תּל" וואָס באהאלט די סימנים, דאָס איבערבליבענקע, פֿון מענטשן און שטעט וואָס זיינען אמאָל געווען און זיינען היינט באגראָבט אין פאהנעסן. די שטרקעלער פֿון א פֿאַרנאַנענהייט וואָס מען נעפֿינט אין דעם תּל דערציילן אונדז די מעשׂה פֿון וואָס עס איז געווען, ווי מענטשן האָבן געלעבט.

נו, וואָס האָבן די שטיקעלער פֿון א פֿאַרנאַנענהייט צו טאָן מיט אונדזער היינטיקן נרן פֿון "תּל" וי א סינאָנים פֿאר א שלימזדיק לעבן; צעבראָכן, פֿאַרלאָרן, פֿאַריתומט? איינער וואָס מאַכט א תּל פֿון לעבן לאָזט איבער שטיקעלער פֿון זיך אַליין און פֿון דער קהילה מיט וועמען ער האָט צו טאָן.

"תּל" האָט א בריסערע מיינונג וי "שאָדן" אָדער "קאַליע". אין דעם פּראָצעס פֿון מאַכן א תּל טוס מען שאָדן צו זיך. מען מאַכט קאַליע דאָס וואָס איז טײַער פֿאַר זיך אין צו די וואָס מיר האַלטן טײַער. דער רעזולטאַט איז א תּל.

ייִדיש איז ריין אין וועלט וואָס באַשריבן דעם וואָס מאַכט א תּל. לויגט צו די איבערלעבענישן וואָס איז די סחורה פֿון ארכעאָלאָגן און איר האָט א קאַפּיטל אין אקאדעמישער געשיכטע. אונדזער ליטעראַטור איז שארף אין פֿאַרשטעלן דעם שלימזל וי דער סאַלאַנטפֿולער מאַכער פֿון תּל. שלום עליכם האָט אונדז געגעבן מנכעם־מענדל וואָס האָט נעמאַכט א תּל פֿון אלע זיינע געשעפֿטן– צו זיין וויב און קינדערס באַדויער.

מיר זאָגן וועגן דעם שלימזל אז ער מאַכט אַליין צו נישט...מאַכט אש און רויך...מאַכט גליק מיט דער ערה. א שלימזל גייט פֿון שלעכט צו ערגער. וען ער געפֿינט א גרוב פֿאַלט ער אריין איבער די אויערן. פֿאַר א שלימזל גייט די נאַנצע חלה אַריין אין דער מרצע. פֿאר דעם שלימזל פֿאַלט דאָס ברויט אים שטענדיק מיט דער פּוטער אַראָפּ. וווּ עס פֿאַלט א שטיין טרעפֿט ער אים אַליין.

דער וואָס מאַכט א תּל איז נישט לאָוו־דפֿקא אָן לערנען. די זאַך איז, פֿאַרן שלימזל האָט זיך דאָס לערנען נישט געקלעפּט. זיין ענגע פֿירס אים. מיר פֿאַרשטיין אז נאָכן שלימזל דאַרף מען קיין שליח נישט שיקן. ער געפֿינט אונדז און קען דינען אפֿילו אין די הירכע פֿענצטער. מיר האָבן א ביישפּיל פֿון א יעלכן נאָענט ביים האַנט און פֿאַרשטיין ניט וויי מיליאָנען ניין אים נאָך.

אפֿשׁר אין עסלעכע הונדערט יאָר אַרום, וען ארכעאָלאָגן וועלן גראָבן אין אונדזער "תּל" און עקזאַמינירן די נעבליבענע שטיקעלער פֿון א קהילה וואָס איז געווען, וועלן זי זיך וונדערן וועגן דער פֿאַליסק פֿון אונדזער צייט. וי איר האָט גליק פֿאַרשטאַנען פֿון קפּל פֿון היינטיקן ארטיקל בין איך נישט קיין שטיצער פֿון סרומפֿ; א נארטעפּסישער בולוואַן וואָס איך האָב מורא וועט מאַכן א תּל, נישט נאָר פֿון אַמעריקע, נאָר פֿון דער גאַנצער וועלט.

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A survivor's story retold as a musical symphony

MICHAEL FRAIMAN
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Adi Berkovits

One story about Adi Berkovits's father has stuck with him for years.

The story takes place after his father, Eduard Berkovits, survived Auschwitz and was liberated by American soldiers. Then 16, his father found himself faced with a daunting new challenge: he had to find his own way home.

"He was completely homeless," Adi Berkovits says. "He was hungry. He was cold. He just had this incredible power to live and a determination to just actually get home."

Home was the Romanian city called Cluj-Napoca, about 600 kilometres southeast. In postwar Europe, there were no passenger trains or convenient buses — and even if there were, he had no way to pay for them. His brother, who also survived, was 13. Their parents had been killed after one day in Auschwitz.

The resulting three-month journey, involving numerous cargo trains and a stolen horse and carriage, proved to be a pivotal story in the elder Berkovits's life — one that Adi Berkovits knew nothing about growing up.

Now in his 40s, 13 years after his father died, Berkovits is telling the story of that quest in a new original symphonic concert, *The Journey Home*, which will be performed on Nov. 3, in Richmond Hill, Ont. (The show has been postponed from its March 25 date due to the coronovirus outbreak.)

The idea came to Berkovits, who is a composer and musician, after hearing his father's story for the first time. Growing up, Berkovits avoided the whole situation; his father didn't talk much about the Holocaust and he felt uncomfortable asking about it.

In 1995, Eduard Berkovits was invited to record a four-hour long interview for Steven Spielberg's USC Shoah Foundation, which collected more than 50,000 survivors' stories throughout the 1990s. Berkovits recalls his father sitting in the living room alone with the interviewers, door closed, revealing a deeply traumatic story that the younger Berkovits never really asked about.

Even after receiving a video copy of his father's testimony, he shelved it.

"It took me 10 years or so to get the courage to watch the video," Berkovits says. "I had this instinct in me that I would be very upset, or I would break down."

Once he finally watched it, what struck him most was the story of his father's journey home.

"As a musician, it kind of hit me — I need to make a musical out of this," he says. He mulled over the project for years, putting it aside until after his father's death. Recently, he says, "A switch in my brain flipped. It flipped, and it just said, man, you have to finish this."

He began wondering what kind of format would best suit the show, eventually landing on a symphonic concert, drawing from his own interest in classical music and progressive rock.

The show features only three songs with lyrics, and is otherwise narrated by his late father, whose interview, projected on an 80-foot screen behind the musicians, appears in brief moments spliced between songs.

"He's the star of the show," Berkovits says with a laugh. "Not me."

Berkovits himself will perform onstage, playing the piano and keyboard. Among the other musicians will be a violinist playing an especially unique instrument — a violin Berkovits's father carried all the way home from the concentration camp.

His father, Berkovits explains, was hesitant to leave the camp after liberation. After sticking around a few days, he wandered around the vacant German barracks and found a violin sitting in its case. The instrument reminded him of his own father's love of classical music, especially the violin.

"Without even thinking about it, he picked it up and carried it all the way home as a good-luck charm," Berkovits says.

Berkovits has since had the instrument appraised. A factory-made product, it isn't worth much in hard cash, but its sentimental value is tremendous. Onstage, it will feature prominently during the lone klezmer song of the night. "We want this thing to soar," he says.

For Berkovits, who avoided listening to his father's story for so many years, the performance has forced him embrace his father's struggle. After his father died, Berkovits's passion project had adopted even more meaning.

If his father were alive, Berkovits says, "He would probably say, 'Adi, What are you doing this for? This is no big deal.'" But the show has also brought him closer to his father's memory.

"When he talks, I hear his voice now," he says. "It feels good. It puts me into a happy place ... I wanted to write this to hopefully inspire others." ■

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Memoir preserves the memory of Lithuanian Jews

CURT LEVIANT
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

> *The author gives us a historian's sweep of an area, with a memoirist's penchant for detail.*

The Odyssey of an Apple Thief, *by Moishe Rozenbaumas, translated from the French by Jonathan Layton*
Syracuse University Press

From the page before the opening of Moishe Rozenbaumas' incisive, heart-felt memoir we already feel the pain that will be inherent throughout much of his story. Even before we begin reading his autobiography, we see a photocopy of the author's dedication, hand-written in Yiddish, to the memory of his mother and three brothers, with the dates they were murdered by the Germans' Lithuanian collaborators in August 1941, in Telz, where Rozenbaumas (1922-2016) was born.

Many people know Telz as the name of the famous yeshiva that was located there, but *The Odyssey of an Apple Thief*, by Rozenbaumas takes us into the city, depicting a vibrant Jewish culture, zeroing in on housing, way of life, learning and sports. The author gives us a historian's sweep of an area, with a memoirist's penchant for detail. (The title comes from little Moishe's sneaking into the bishop's orchard next door and nabbing apples.)

For instance, his description of a middle-class household's Shabbat meal. Although Jews lived "in poverty, hand to mouth," middle-class Jews had bountiful Shabbat meals. Typical to eastern European towns, the housewife prepared the cholent pot at home, then brought it to the baker, whose oven was heated all Friday night long throughout the Sabbath. Then, around noon-time on Shabbat, the woman would go and pick up her cholent. Most Jews didn't have the sort of meals that Rozenbaumas describes, which was at odds with the reigning poverty in Telz.

When the Germans occupy Lithuania, Rozenbaumas accents the avid co-operation between the Lithuanians and the Germans, who murdered 90 per cent of Lithuania's Jews. But yet he writes that the situation of the Jews in Lithuania was no worse than in other countries; they weren't loved but they were tolerated. However, in the very next sentence we read that once when the president of Lithuania addressed an anti-Semitic rally, he said that nobody should be stupid enough to slaughter a productive cow while it's still giving milk.

Rozenbaumas also provides what he considers a needed reassessment of the *yizkor bikher*, the memorial books that survivors of various towns assembled after the Holocaust, which always accented the people's "piety, purity and morality," even though they had all kinds of individuals. What is often omitted from these *yizkor bikher*, Rozenbaumas states, is the miserable poverty of Jews who lived in lightless cellars, had only black bread dipped in powdered sugar for food, froze in winter and dressed in rags.

During the financial crisis in the late 1920s, his father's successful fabric shop began slipping. Rather than declaring bankruptcy, the father ran away to Paris where his sisters lived. Despite continuing promises, the father never sent any support to his wife and children, and was unaware of what happened to his family until after the war.

Now without a father, the author's mother and her four boys slowly sank into poverty and hunger. Moishe becomes an apprentice to a poor tailor with 10 children who live in squalid quarters. Soon he is the sole breadwinner for his family. But when the Germans invade, he flees eastward to the Soviet Union, just like his father fled westward. But the author doesn't notice the irony of the breadwinner again fleeing alone. True, Moishe asks his mother to come, but she refuses. But Moishe doesn't ask any of his brothers to join him in this flight.

In the Soviet Union life wasn't easy. First, Moishe served four years on the front, undertaking dangerous reconnaissance missions; he was wounded and decorated several times. He regrets that Jewish ex-soldiers from other lands never mention the half million Jews who fought with the Red Army, including hundreds of Jewish generals and other high-ranking officers.

When Moishe's unit liberates Lithuania, first thing he does is go to his house in Telz, where he finds Lithuanians occupying his now emptied home. He learns where his family had been massacred and longs for revenge, which soon comes. After volunteering as a translator for the Russians, he gets the satisfaction of hunting for the Lithuanian murderers, finding them, watching their trials and immediate executions. He even found the murderer of his youngest brother, Leybe, "who may have been," Moishe adds, "his playmate."

When Rozenbaumas finally decides to leave communist-controlled Lithuania, he describes the nightmare of leaving, taking the great risk of paying an exorbitant fee for forged papers that would guarantee his exit. He makes it, finally, across the border into Poland, with suspense and fright accompanying him like a second skin. It was not until he got to Vienna that he could breathe freely.

One day Rozenbaumas met a man who knew about his father in Paris and thus was able to find him. But the father-son relationship is uneasy. His father never expressed a word of emotion regarding the murder of his wife and his three sons. Coincidence also plays another crucial role. Moishe by chance bumps into his old girlfriend, Roza, and later marries her.

Rozenbaumas concludes his touching narrative with the hope that the stories of the European Jewish civilization that was brutally erased from the face of the earth will not be forgotten. ■

Curt Leviant's most recent novel is Katz or Cats; Or, How Jesus Became My Rival in Love.

THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
MARCH 19, 2020

An ambassador of the humble, oft-overlooked mandolin

LAUREN KRAMER
PACIFIC CORRESPONDENT

Israeli mandolinist Avi Avital, 41, will be performing with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra in May, the only Canadian engagements that have him travelling the world and playing with prestigious orchestras.

A kid from a Moroccan family who had made aliyah in the 1960s, he came from no great musical lineage. Instead, he developed his passion for music organically and chose his instrument, the humble, oft-overlooked mandolin, quite by chance.

Today he has become the ambassador for the mandolin and a driving force behind the commission of new compositions and concertos for it. He has commissioned over a hundred new pieces written specifically for the mandolin, and his performance of Giovanni Sollima's mandolin concerto in Vancouver will be the North American premiere for a piece, he says, was written specifically for him.

Avital first picked up his neighbour's mandolin in his Beersheba home at the age of seven. While he was physically far from the cultural, music centres in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, his hometown happened to be the location of a youth mandolin orchestra run by Russian-born violinist Simcha Nathanson.

"My neighbour played in it and when I went to see a concert, where 50 kids were on the stage, it really appealed to me as a kid," he recalled. "My first love was born from this – having the instrument really close and being able to touch it and make noise from it."

Firm in the knowledge that classical music could only enhance their son's education, Avital's parents encouraged him to take lessons at a music conservatory in Beersheba. But other than his love for the mandolin, his school years were just like any other Israeli kid.

"I went to a normal high school and majored in science, playing with the mandolin youth orchestra in my free time. It wasn't until the Israeli military sent me a letter suggesting that I audition – a privilege reserved for promising musicians – that it occurred to me that the mandolin would become my life."

The Israeli Defence Force selects 20 musicians from 300 applicants and gives them the opportunity to play their instrument during their military service. Avital was one of those 20, and when he completed his service he enrolled at the Jerusalem Music Academy. Later he continued his studies at the Conservatorio Cesare Pollini in Padua, Italy, with Ugo Orlandi, and it was in Europe that he launched his career.

Avi Avital

When he began playing the mandolin professionally, Avital played arrangements of pieces written for flute or violin. "There wasn't much written for mandolin," he explains. "Most of the composers that we all know did not write for the mandolin and with the exception of two pieces by Vivaldi and four by Beethoven, there are very few classical pieces for the mandolin that survived the test of centuries."

The mandolin was considered an amateur instrument by composers, who tended to stay away from it and concentrate on more complex instruments that were part of the classical music canon. Except for singular cases, it never entered the classical music tradition as a serious concert instrument. Over the years, that absence conditioned other composers and musicians to not to choose the mandolin either.

Avital realized he had some work to do to bring the mandolin to the forefront. "I felt I couldn't call myself a mandolin player if I was playing pieces that were not composed for the mandolin. I know it is a worthy instrument for inclusion in the classical music canon, and so I started to encourage composers to write pieces for the mandolin."

His inspiration was Andres Segovia, who had accomplished this feat on the classical guitar. A century ago the classical guitar was a humble instrument with very few pieces written for it. Then Segovia started to play guitar in serious concert halls and to commission classical guitar pieces from the greatest composers of his generation. He influenced other great guitarists to continue this path and today, says Avital, the guitar is part of every concert series and high quality repertoire.

> *I couldn't call myself a mandolin player if I was playing pieces that were not composed for the mandolin.*

"I was encouraged and inspired to do the same," Avital says. "The mandolin is a beautiful instrument yet to be discovered."

Like any great work of art, a commission of a musical piece carries a financial burden. Sometimes Avital will collaborate with several orchestras to co-commission a piece, and they share the expense with private sponsors. In the case of Sollima's concerto, things were more personal, though.

"Sollima is a cellist, performer and composer and our first collaboration was in a festival in Italy, a mega concert dedicated to folk music with an audience of 250,000. He was the artistic director and because he knew I had a love for traditional music and improvisation, he invited me to participate. Many collaborations were born from this experience and they culminated in the mandolin concerto I asked him to write," Avital says.

"He composed it after he really knew me and had experience performing with me. And I felt an immediate connection with the music, because it challenges me enough technically, but also uses everything I have to offer in terms of expressivity and character."

In between his many performances and a life spent moving between hotels and different orchestras, Avital has a bigger plan in mind. "My goal is to contribute repertoire to the canon of classical music in the hope that future mandolin players will be able to play a greater repertoire. Some of those composers are terrified because it's the first time they've been asked to write for the mandolin. But this is also a challenge, an opportunity to write for an instrument that doesn't have much repertoire."

Today, Avital, his Israeli wife and their six-year-old son live in Berlin, a city he describes as a "hub, with artists from all over the world inspiring and nurturing each other. Berlin is the heart of classical music in Europe, and that's where you sign all the major labels. I tour the world all the time and Berlin, despite its dark history, is one of the most cosmopolitan, open-minded, liberal cities I've ever been to."

Still, he's every bit Israeli and returns home four times a year to reunite with friends and family.

"We speak Hebrew at home and you'll find hummus in our fridge at any time," he says. As his son approaches the age when Avital first discovered the mandolin, he is taking piano lessons and playing on a kid-sized drum set and ukulele. Avital is determined not to steer his boy in any one direction. "I wasn't pushed ever, just encouraged to practise," he recalls. "Making music is a flame that should be kept burning."■

Avi Avital is scheduled to play in Vancouver with the VSO and Paolo Bortolameolli at the Centennial Theatre on May 7, the Bell Performing Arts Centre on May 8 and the Orpheum Theatre on May 9. See vancouversymphony.ca for more information.

Quebec band embraces klezmer with a resounding "K"

HEATHER SOLOMON
SPECIAL TO THE CJN, MONTREAL

What a difference a letter can make. Just ask Oktopus, the Montreal-based eight-member klezmer band.

"The "K "is for klezmer. And as I always say in our shows, if people looking for us in an Internet search write it with a "C", they will find a lot of sea monsters, not a lot of klezmer bands," says the octet's founder, Gabriel Paquin-Buki.

Paquin-Buki heads one of the few entirely French-Canadian klezmer groups in Quebec, but he has a genuine claim to his repertoire.

"I listened to this music as a child and grew up with it," says Paquin-Buki, who notes that it comprised his father's favourite playlist.

After obtaining his bachelor's degree in classical clarinet performance from the Université de Montréal, Paquin-Buki realized that orchestra seats were a rare commodity, so he rerouted into comparative literature for his master's, with a focus on the Shoah. The subject held a personal connection, as his grandfather had been murdered in Auschwitz.

"The first thing I learned from it is the most important thing I could do is keep the memory alive. When I missed making music I returned to it to focus on klezmer, though it took me a while to learn to improvise. I think of my roots, and when I compose or arrange, my grandfather is still there," he says.

Oktopus band members, from left, Mathieu Bourget (bass trombone), Veronica Ungureanu (violin), Guillaume Martineau (keyboards), Gabriel Paquin-Buki (clarinet), Maxime Philippe (percussion), Madeleine Doyon-Robitaille (trombone), Francis Pigeon (trumpet) and Marilène Provencher-Leduc (flute). EMMANUEL CROMBEZ PHOTO

As a child, Paquin-Buki took piano lessons and then, in high school, when he couldn't settle on what else to play, he was handed a clarinet. "It turned out to be a good thing for playing klezmer music," he says.

Oktopus was born in 2010, and by 2012, the band was playing professional gigs and getting ready to record albums. Their first, titled *Lever l'encre* (2014), set the band's tone by incorporating Québécois composers into the mix, even giving the music of Félix Leclerc a klezmer twist.

"It's like a little bridge into klezmer for people across Quebec. And klezmer is music that everyone can relate to," says Paquin-Buki.

In 2017, the band's second album, *Hapax* garnered nominations both for Instrumental Album of the Year at the 2018 Juno Awards and Best World Music Group at the Canadian Folk Music Awards.

The album is deeply affective, with its combination of infectious *freilachs* and the more sombre side of Jewish soul, such as the haunting composition *Le rêve d'Anne Frank*.

"In the early years, we felt obliged to play only upbeat music because people were hoping to dance all the time. But klezmer music has different shades," says Paquin-Buki.

In 2017, he teamed up with klezmer accordionist Henri Oppenheim and two others to play as a quartet at Bourgie Hall as part of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts' concert series in connection with its major exhibition *Chagall: Colour and Music*.

"Henri and I each composed a movement inspired by the art of Chagall. I later brought what I composed to Oktopus. Now, violinist Vanessa Marcoux and I compose for Oktopus, but mostly we play my arrangements of klezmer, Maghreb and Balkan music," he says.

Oktopus has played festivals, cultural centres and shuls across Canada, and has also appeared in Belgium, France and Germany. This August, the group is scheduled to play the Salmon Arm Roots and Blues Festival in British Columbia. ■

Congratulations to Naomi and her husband, CJN podcast host James, on the birth of their daughter! Hopefully she likes sports as much as her dad does.

Mazel tov to Alexandra and Noah Joseph on the birth of their daughter Maetav - sister to Gershon and granddaughter to Annette and David Joseph - in Jerusalem on July 19.

Happy 90th birthday to Eva Klein, a very remarkable mother and bubbe who still cooks and serves in her home the best dishes for family. We all love you!

Happy ninth birthday to Samuel! Love from your family, Dad, Mom and Ephram Winter. You are such a loving person to everyone!

Some innovative dishes for the Pesach seder

BARBARA SILVERSTEIN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Amy Stopnicki is a great go-to person for getting some practical and creative tips on preparing meals for Passover.

Stopnicki, a cookbook author, food columnist and popular food blogger, is among a younger generation of kosher food chefs and authors who have been at the forefront of modernizing kosher food trends with their innovative recipes.

Stopnicki is the author of *Kosher Taste Plan. Prepare. Plate.* She also writes a weekly food column for Metroland Media and has amassed a large following on Instagram. "It's become a huge platform in the world of food," she said.

"Food is a big connector ... There are all these foodies on Instagram" she said. "I'll post a recipe and people will respond. I'll see someone in Sobeys and they'll say, 'Thank you, for a recipe.'

"I have made friends with food bloggers from New York through Instagram."

Her advice for the Passover seder is to keep the food as simple as possible.

A dish of vegetables roasted with olive oil and spices is simple, but delicious, she said.

Her pulled brisket recipe presented with a couple of sauces can work well for a seder or any other kind of entertaining, she said. "It's delicious served over baked potatoes or to create an entertaining board with grilled vegetables, grilled chicken and baked salami."

Stopnicki said the oils she uses on Passover – olive and coconut – are the same types of oils she uses during the year.

As for what to do with all the chicken from the soup that often goes uneaten, Stopnicki has offered her recipe for chicken salad with mango and avocado.

Her Pesach biscotti with chocolate chips is always a crowd pleaser, she added. ■

You can find more of Stopnicki's recipes on Instagram by searching for @amyskoshertaste or go to Amystopnicki.com.

Passover chicken salad

- 1 mango, diced
- 1 large avocado, diced
- 1-2 green onions, chopped
- 3-4 chicken breasts diced
- 5 ml (1 tsp) lemon juice
- 5 ml (1 tsp) lime juice
- 2 cloves chopped garlic
- Salt and pepper to taste

If using chicken from soup, remove the skin and bones.

In a large bowl combine the chicken, onions, avocado, lemon juice, garlic, salt and peppercorns. Toss gently and serve.

Makes 4 to 6 servings

PASSOVER
Holiday Features from our Kitchen

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Passover pulled brisket

- ❑ 8 cloves garlic, chopped
- ❑ 125 ml (½ cup) Passover BBQ sauce
- ❑ 15 ml (1 tbsp) oil
- ❑ 1 large onion, finely diced
- ❑ 125 ml (½ cup) ketchup
- ❑ 80 ml (1/3 cup) brown sugar
- ❑ 50 ml (¼ cup) passover vinegar
- ❑ 125 ml (½ cup) honey
- ❑ 5 ml (1 tsp) pepper
- ❑ 30-45 ml (2-3 tbsp) dried onion flakes
- ❑ Salt to taste
- ❑ 1 brisket 2 to 2½ kg (4-5 lb)
- ❑ Water

To prepare, combine the garlic, barbecue sauce, oil, onion, ketchup, sugar, vinegar, honey, pepper, onion and salt, mix well in a large container.

Marinate the brisket in this mixture overnight or for 45 minutes at room temperature.

Preheat the oven to 130 C (250 F).

Put the marinated brisket and sauce into a baking dish.

Add water so the brisket is covered approximately 1/3 of the way up, mix the water to combine it with the sauce.

Cook the brisket for 5 hours.

When cooked, pull the brisket using a fork.

Pesach biscotti

- ❑ 500 ml (2 cups) almond flour
- ❑ 250 ml (1 cup) potato starch
- ❑ 250 ml (1 cup) sugar
- ❑ 125 ml (½ cup) olive oil
- ❑ 2 eggs
- ❑ 50 ml (¼ cup) mini chocolate chips

Preheat the oven to 190°C (375°F).

Combine the almond flour, potato starch and sugar.

Create a hole in the centre of the ingredients and add the oil and eggs. Mix well, then add the chocolate chips and mix all the ingredients together.

Shape the dough into one large log about 12 x 45-cm (5 x 20-inches).

Bake for 15-20 minutes or until the outside of the log is golden brown.

Let the log cool. Slice the log into 1½ cm (½-inch) slices and lay them flat on a cookie sheet.

Turn the oven down to 190 C (325 F) and continue baking for 15-20 minutes or until the cookies are set.

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Our Seder Set Menu

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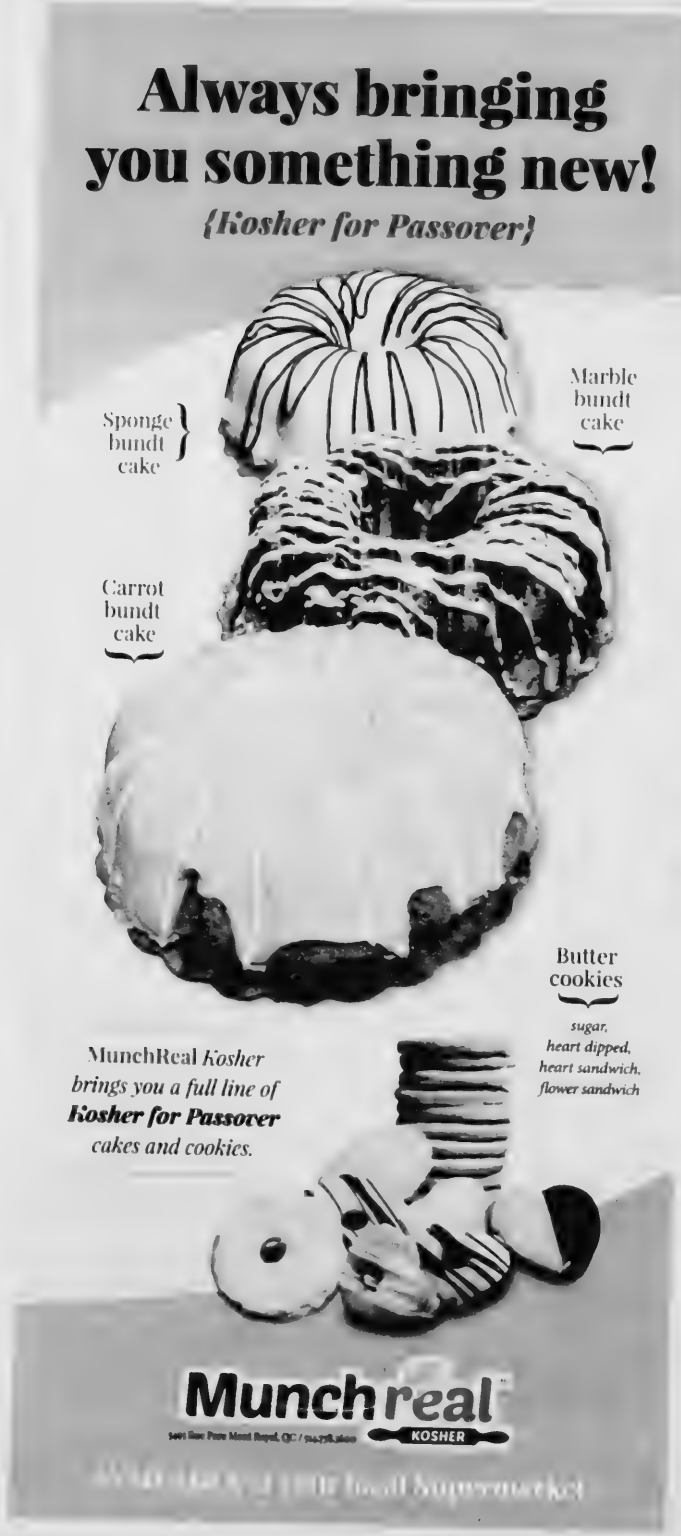
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Satisfying (vegetarian) seder dishes

CAROLYN BLACKMAN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

In many families, the go-to meals for the seder include chicken soup and a variety of beef or chicken. More and more, however, people are searching for vegetarian or vegan dishes to satisfy family or guests who have adopted this lifestyle.

Frances Kraft, a former reporter at *The CJN*, says she has been making vegetarian seders for a number of years because she has up to seven vegetarians at her table, including three or four vegans. "I serve buffet-style, and all dishes are labelled as vegetarian, vegan, nut-free etc. A number of guests bring food, so I also include who made it, in case someone has questions."

Her seders have always been successful, she says. "My cousin, who loves meat, enjoys the fish very much, and my son who is a meat eater, says the seder is about the people, not the meat. There are a lot of things you can do without the meat." ■

Vegetarian chopped liver

Kraft adapted this vegetarian chopped liver from cookbook author Joan Nathan.

- 225 g (½ lb) mushrooms, chopped
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 45 ml (3 tbsp) vegetable oil
- 250 ml (1 cup) chopped walnuts
- salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
- 15 ml (1 tbsp) water

To prepare, sauté the mushrooms and onion in the vegetable oil over a medium heat until the onion is clear.

Turn into a blender or food processor, add the walnuts, salt and pepper, and the water. Process until blended but not too smooth. Serve as a spread with matzah.

Yields about 250 ml (1 cup).

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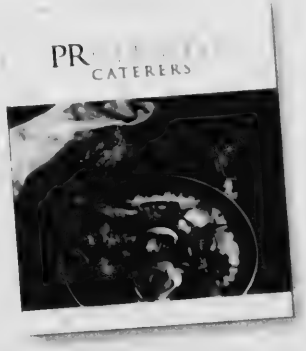

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SIDE DISHES AND DESSERTS

Kraft received the following two recipes from Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl, the rabbi emeritus of Beth Tzedec Congregation. The kugel is a particularly favourite side dish at his family seder.

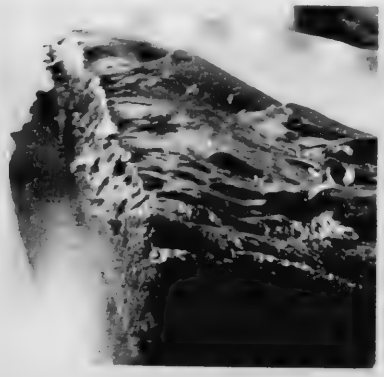
Apple-matzah kugel

- 4 matzot
- 3 eggs, beaten
- 2 ml (½ tsp) salt
- 50 ml (¼ cup) pareve margarine, melted
- 50 ml (½ cup) sugar
- 5 ml (1 tsp) cinnamon
- 125 ml (½ cup) ground or chopped nuts (they like almonds)
- 2 to 3 apples, peeled and chopped
- 125 ml (½ cup) raisins, if desired

Soak matzot in water to soften then drain. Beat eggs, salt, sugar, margarine and cinnamon, and add to matzot and beat. Add chopped nuts, apples and raisins, if using.

Place in a 20-cm (8-inch) square or round pan. Drizzle margarine on surface. Bake at 180 C (350 F) for 40 to 50 minutes or until surface is lightly browned.

Serves six to eight people.



Chocolate mousse cake

- 10 eggs, separated
- 1 cup sugar
- 175 ml (6 fl. oz.) semi-sweet chocolate, melted and cooled
- 30 ml (1/8 cup) melted margarine
- 500 ml (2 cups) ground nuts

Preheat oven to 180 C (350 F). Beat yolks and sugar until lemon coloured. Fold in melted chocolate, margarine and nuts.

Retain one-quarter of this mixture on the side.

Beat egg whites until they form peaks. Fold into chocolate mixture. Place in a 25-cm (10-inch) springform pan. Bake at 180 C (350 F) for 45 to 60 minutes, until surface bounces back.

After cooling, place remaining chocolate mixture on top. Cool in refrigerator.

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Parashah

Vayakhel/Pekudei | Exodus 35:1–40:38

Rabbi Andrew Rosenblatt considers how we express religion through art
Rabbi Michal Shekel lays out the fundamentals of our partnership with God
Rabbi Howard Morrison explains the value of having a calendar to call our own

Rabbi Andrew Rosenblatt

There is one section of the Torah that receives more attention and more verses than any other subject: the building of the Mishkan (Tabernacle). Though the instructions are very detailed, it is also evident that there was much artistry and creativity that was imparted by the craftsmen. The words *nediv lev* (of giving heart) and *hakham lev* (of wise heart) are repeated often in connection with the production of the Mishkan and its vessels.

Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch wrote, "The gifts of the individual are to be given to the community for divine purposes.... The meaning of (the root) *nun-dalet-bet* is that it flows from within a person.... A person who is *nadiv* is someone who is free and independent, such that his actions are motivated solely by the dictates of his inner self."

Rabbi Hirsch goes on to explain, "*Nediv* in itself would designate the free-willed nature of the action, this voluntary nature of the action is quite specially stressed by the addition of the word *lev*/*nediv lev*, and to a still higher degree, *nediv libo* (moved by his own heart).... All exterior influence is excluded."

One feature of life without a Temple is the loss of this form of artistry at the centre of the Jewish people. This form of expression is not entirely absent from Jewish life. A tour of Italy and its synagogues would reveal centuries of inspiration and creativity. Highlights of such a survey would include the interior of the Tempio Maggiore (Great Synagogue) in Rome and the centuries-old *Aron Kodesh* of the Ponevezh Yeshivah, originally from Italy and transferred to the yeshivah.

I think this idea of expressing religious emotion and idea through art has atrophied in the contemporary context. I, for one, am excited for a revival of this type of expression. ■

Rabbi Andrew Rosenblatt is the spiritual leader of Congregation Schara Tzedeck in Vancouver.

Rabbi Michal Shekel

Anyone who has undertaken even a simple renovation knows how complex a matter it can be. Is it any wonder, then, that one-third of the Book of Shemot (Exodus) is devoted to the construction of the Mishkan (Tabernacle)? (In comparison, the creation of the world is covered in just two chapters of Bereshit (Genesis)). Many of the specifics of the Mishkan are covered in this week's double parashah, Vayakhel-Pekudei. There are detailed descriptions of the material supplied for the construction project, as well as for the garments of the priests who would serve in this facility.

Most striking is the focus on the attitude of those who took part in bringing the project to fruition, whether as suppliers or tradespeople. Their intent was of prime importance. In Chapter 35, the Torah says, materials were volunteered by those whose hearts moved them to do so. And the building of the Mishkan was undertaken by folks who not only had excellent ability, but whose spirit moved them as well.

The emphasis on intent is crucial. Midrash Shemot Rabbah notes similarities in the descriptions for building the Mishkan and constructing the Golden Calf. However, Bible scholar Nehama Leibowitz sees a crucial difference, in that "gold alone was given to the calf, but gold and a willing heart was given to the Tabernacle. The giving of the heart was essential."

This Shabbat is Shabbat ha-Hodesh, which occurs on the Shabbat right before the month of Nisan. In the special reading for this occasion, we are instructed that "This month shall mark for you the beginning of the months; it shall be the first of the months of the year for you" (Exodus 12:2). In this commandment, God places time, via the calendar, in our hands.

Within the second book of the Torah, God liberates us, then makes us partners in the shaping of holy time – by way of the calendar – and forming holy space through the Mishkan. It may be quite a learning curve for us, but all that is needed is a willing heart. ■

Rabbi Michal Shekel is the executive director of the Toronto Board of Rabbis and spiritual leader of Har Tikvah Congregation in Brampton, Ont.

Rabbi Howard Morrison

This Shabbat, our Torah readings centre on endings and beginnings. We will be completing the second book of the Torah, Shemot (Exodus). The book, which revolves around slavery and the beginnings of freedom, culminates with the establishment of a portable sanctuary, employing language that mirrors the words used to describe God's creation of the world.

After we finish any book of the Torah, we add three postscript words: *Chazak, chazak v'nitchazek* (Be of strength, be of strength, and let us be strengthened as one). While the first two words are identical and in the singular, the third word, which stems from the same root, suggests that Torah brings a community together and strengthens it. As a familiar proverb states, "a stick alone is breakable, but a bundle of sticks is unbreakable." The word *chazak* also suggests taking ownership and responsibility. As we complete a book of Torah, we take ownership and responsibility of the many teachings found within.

This Shabbat also connotes beginnings. The special *maftir* for Shabbat ha-Hodesh illustrates that, in a matter of days, we will usher in the new month of Nisan. In the additional reading, the Israelites are commanded to establish and sanctify their own calendar, making Nisan, the month of the Exodus, the first month of the year.

An essential aspect of freedom is living according to the ideals of one's own calendar and not someone else's. With the origins of the Jewish calendar, our ancestors were no longer bound to the structure of the Egyptian calendar. Now, the values of Judaism would permeate our people on a daily basis. The week would revolve around Shabbat. The month would revolve around Rosh Hodesh. The year would revolve around significant holy day periods.

Let us celebrate and appreciate the lessons of this Shabbat, as we conclude the second book of the Torah. At the same time, we will introduce the coming of the first month of the calendar year and the celebration of Pesach. ■

Rabbi Howard Morrison is senior rabbi – mara d'atra at Beth EmethBais Yehuda Synagogue in Toronto.

Social Scene

Shawn Kimel, Kate Schatzky, Debbie and Warren Kimel

Barbara Berryman, Cari Kozierok and Avrum Rosenzweig

Joanna Klimczak and Lev Bukhman

The Ve'ahavta Project – Donor Reception

TORONTO

Ve'ahavta held an evening of appreciation for all its generous supporters of its first Ve'ahavta Project. The event was graciously hosted in the home of Warren and Debbie Kimel. Special thanks to the co-chairs of the program, Kate Schatzsky and Shawn Kimel. ■

Ricky and Arnold Englander

Ron Haber, Lisa Davis, Larry Zimmerman, Robert Beliak, Tammy Glied, Gary Samuel and Paula Zivot

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Kate Essex, Barbro Kimel, David Schatzky, Marilyn and Marty Cutler

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Chaim Baker, Jennifer Turack and Naomi Silver

SARA CORNTHWAITE PHOTOS

What's New

MARCH 19 - 26

by Lila Sarick

Purim fun

Chai Lifeline Canada sponsored a Purim carnival for about 250 people on March 8. Families enjoyed inflatable midway games, a carousel, jumping castle, Purim puppet- and card-making, face painting, balloon twisting, a stilt walker and a wide variety of snacks and treats.

Thursday, March 19

THE PROGRESSIVE TALMUD
Rabbi Jordan Shaner discusses "Environmentalism and the Value of Creation," 7:30 p.m., Temple Sinai.

TANAKH STUDY
Aaron Nussbaum resumes his Tanakh class, studying the Book of Samuel II, 9:30 a.m. at Beth David.

LUNCHTIME LEARNING
Rachael's Centre for Torah, Mussar and Ethics presents a class on " Current Events Through a Mussar Lens," 12:15 p.m., Columbus Centre, 901 Lawrence Ave. W. The class is also available online. Register at rachaelscentre.com.

Sunday, March 22

AFFORDABLE HOUSING
Darchei Noam hosts a panel discussion on "Affordable Housing: What You Can Do About It," 7 p.m.

JEWISH TRADITION AND CAMPUS
Torah teacher **Hana Werner** and student activist **Ilana Lazar** discuss "What Can the Jewish Tradition Teach Us About Contemporary Jewish Campus Life?" 10:30 a.m., Adath Israel.

PESACH LEARNING FOR WOMEN
Devorah Vale discusses "Getting Out of Egypt: Freedom Begins in the Mind"; **Rabbi Eitan Aviner** discusses "The Guarded Truth of Shemurah Matzah," 10 a.m., Yeshivat Or Chaim. Free. Details: info@torontotorah.com.

Monday, March 23

LUNCH-AND-LEARN
Dr. Jeffrey Lipsitz and **Aaron Arkin** discuss how sleep disorders can be diagnosed and treated, noon, Temple Sinai. $15/$18. Register: templesinai.net.

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS
Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner discusses "Supporting the Emotionally Unstable Client," 8 p.m., Shaarei Shomayim.

Tuesday, March 24

MORNING STUDY GROUP
Doug Purdon is the guest speaker at a Women of Adath study group breakfast at 9:30 a.m. $10 for non-members. Info: **Marjorie**, 416-780-9156.

HAGGADAH NIGHT
Rabbis **Alex Hecht** and **Mordechai Torczyner, Ezer Diena** and **Netanel Klein** discuss the haggadah, 8 p.m., BAYT.

MENTAL HEALTH SERIES
Paul Litwack discusses "Get Unstuck Now!" 7 p.m., Beit Rayim Synagogue.

IS RELIGION BAD FOR YOU?
Prof. Daniel Rynhold discusses "Is Religion Bad For You?" 7:30 p.m., Beth Tzedec.

SHABBAT ON TUESDAY
Cantor Sydney Ezer, Ezra Burke and **Yacov Fruchter** hold a sing-along of Shabbat tunes, 8 p.m. Beth Tzedec.

Wed., March 25

JEWISH GENEALOGY
Members of the Jewish Genealogical Society discuss "Finding and Using Naturalization and Citizenship Documents in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom," 8 p.m., Shaarei Shomayim. Details: info@jgstoronto.ca.

MANY LIVES, ONE PEOPLE
The Song Shul's series highlighting the lives of Jews around the world continues, 7 p.m., Barbara Frum Library. Free. Details: info@songshul.com.

Thursday, March 26

OMER ADAM
Omer Adam performs in a fundraiser for Ezer Mizion, 8 p.m., Roy Thompson Hall. Tickets at ezermizion.ca/omeradam.

WOMEN FULLY CLOTHED SHOW
CHW- Tamid Chapter presents the comedy troupe Women Fully Clothed (**Teresa Pavlinek, Robin Duke, Kathryn Greenwood** and **Jayne Eastwood**), 8 p.m., City Playhouse Theatre, 1000 New Westminster Dr., Thornhill. $75. Tickets: 416-630-8373, or chw.ca/women-fully-clothed.

JEWISH BIRTH AND DEATH RITUALS
Rabbi Eva Goldfinger discusses "Jewish Birth and Death Rituals – From Superstition to Science," 7 p.m. Borochov Cultural Centre, $20. RSVP: 416-285-3910 or info@oraynu.org.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Deadline:
The deadline for the April 2 paper is March 23. All deadlines are at noon. Phone: 416-391-1836 ext. 269; email: **whatsnewcjn@gmail.com**.

ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT
Beth Tikvah Synagogue presents a Shalom Hartman Institute lecture and study series on "Jewish Values and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," 7:30 p.m. $10 for non-members. RSVP: 416-221-3433.

Et Cetera

CANCER SUPPORT
Cancer support for Jewish women, including social programs, educational events and resources can be found at the L'Chaim Cancer Support Group for Jewish Women. Info: 416-630-0203, or lchaim@ncjwctoronto.org.

REENA'S SOCIAL CLUB
A social club for individuals with autism and developmental disabilities meets Thursdays, 6:30-8:30 p.m., at Beth Sholom Synagogue. $10. RSVP to awindman@reena.org.

DANI ART PROJECTS
DANI Toronto is holding several events to support its art projects. March 23, game night, 7 p.m., Chabad of Markham; March 24, art show, 7 p.m., at DANI Centre, 501 Clark Ave. W., Thornhill; March 25, lunch at the gallery, 11 a.m.- 2 p.m., DANI Centre ; March 26, parent and tot workshop, 10 a.m., DANI Centre. RSVP for workshop by March 19: 905-889-3264.

GAMES AND CARDS
Holy Blossom Temple holds an afternoon of games and cards every Monday, 1:15- 4 p.m. Contact **Abigail Carpenter-Winch**, 416-789-3291 ext. 232.

COMMUNITY SEDER
Temple Kol Ami holds a community seder, April 9, 6 p.m., led by **Rabbi Micah Streiffer**. RSVP by April 1: 905-709-2620.

GOODBYE TO HAMETZ
Beth Tikvah holds a pre-Passover Friday night dinner, April 3. Services at 6 p.m., dinner at 7 p.m. RSVP by March 30: 416-221-3433

BIRDING TRIP WITH ISRAELI PROS
Canadian Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel holds a birding trip with Israeli experts to Point Pelee National Park, May 5-7. RSVP by March 30 to info@cspni.ca.

SPEED DATING
Na'amat Canada Toronto holds a speed dating event for singles in their mid-20s to mid-30s, April 2, 7 p.m., 272 Codsell Ave. $36. Must register by March 19. Email: club.ruach@naamat.com.

For Seniors

❱ **Bernard Betel Centre**, 416-225-2112. March 19, pianist **Victoria Kogan** and violinist **Atis Bankas** present *Beethoven 250*, 7 p.m., $10/$15; March 23, concert with **Emilio Zarris**, 1:30 p.m., $8/$10; March 24, lecture on "Jewish Issues on Film," with **Shlomo Schwartzberg**, 10 a.m., $4.25/$8.50; March 25, opera on a big screen, *Armida*, 1:30 p.m., $4/$8.
❱ **Holy Blossom Temple**. March 23, **Hana Werner** discusses Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Program includes exercise and lunch, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., $3/$5.
❱ **Association of Jewish Seniors.** March 19, Celebrating Nutrition Month, with diabetes education and registered dietitians, 9:30 a.m., Shaarei Shomayim. Register at 647-340-7961.
❱ **B'nai Brith Seniors.** Monday to Friday, lunch and a recreational program are offered. Call 416-633-6224 ext. 134 to register.
❱ **Earl Bales Seniors Club.** Contact **Valerie**, 416-395-7881.

Prosserman JCC

Donald Gales Family Pavilion on the Sherman Campus, 4588 Bathurst St., 416-638-1881 ext. 4020; prossermanjcc.com.
❱ Sign up for the Birthright JCC Fitness Experience, for people 21-26, at israelforfree.com.
❱ Bridge for beginners and intermediates starts March 26, 10 a.m.
❱ **Elana Horwich**, author of *Meal and a Spiel: How to Be a Badass in the Kitchen*, does a cooking demonstration, Lipa Green Centre, March 22, 10:30 a.m. $20.

Miles Nadal JCC

750 Spadina Ave., 416-924-6211, mnjcc.org.

❱ Book launch for **Rabbi Denise Handlarski**'s *The A-Z of Intermarriage*, March 23, 7 p.m
❱ *25 Years of Strings: A Gretchen Paxson Abberger Tribute Concert*, April 1, 7 p.m. $25.
❱ DIY Haggadah Jam: design your own haggadah, March 29, 2 p.m.
❱ Register now for Hebrew and Yiddish classes, which start the week of April 20, ext. 386. Register for children's and adult pottery classes, ext. 606; Sign up for adult ukulele, folk choir, string ensemble and klezmer ensemble, ext. 250.
❱ Five Weeks in Paris: Opera Appreciation with **Iain Scott**, Mondays, March 23-April 27, 1:30-3:30 p.m.
❱ ASL 2: Thursdays, April 23-June 18. Ext. 356 or rachell@mnjcc.org.
❱ Strength of Self, alternating Mondays, 11 a.m. A program for women who have experienced abuse. Call ext. 147.
❱ Shabbat Song Circle, Fridays at 10:30 a.m., for children up to age four with an adult. Ext. 390.
❱ **Seniors Arts and Culture**, ext. 155, lisar@mnjcc.org. Celebrate Shabbat in song with **Cantor Ben Sharpe** and **Jaclyn Klimitz,** March 27, 12:30 p.m. Enjoy a kosher lunch and welcome Shabbat. Free. Register at ext. 0.
❱ **Seniors Fitness**, ext. 521. Start Here, a free community wellness integration program designed to provide peer support, community engagement and learning and recovery opportunities Agency referral required. Call ext. 574.
❱ Michael Bernstein Chapel holds services Thursdays at 7:15 a.m. and Sundays at 8 a.m. Info: **Coleman**, 416-968-0200.

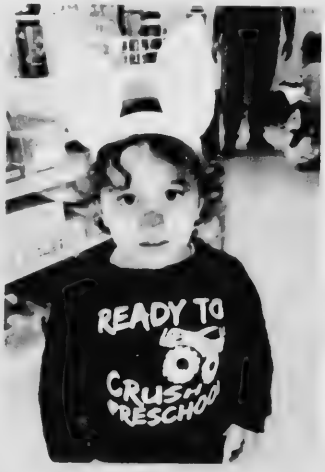
Schwartz/Reisman Centre

Joseph and Wolf Lebovic JCC, 9600 Bathurst St., 905-303-1821. Contact **Andrea** for info: andrea@srcentre.ca, or ext. 3006.
❱ Bridge for beginners starts April 6, 7:30 p.m. Drop-in duplicate bridge, Thursdays at 6:45 p.m.
❱ Day trips to the theatre: April 22, *Chicago* at Stratford Festival; May 7, *Gypsy* at Shaw Festival.
❱ Recreational programs for children, teens and young adults with autism spectrum disorder, contact karina@srcentre.ca, or ext. 3042. ■

SeeJN | Purim fun

Children at an Emunah daycare in Jaffa, Israel, celebrate Purim last week. This daycare is part of the system of Emunah daycares found in low socio-economic neighbourhoods with many children coming from families on welfare.

COURTESY EMUNAH MONTREAL



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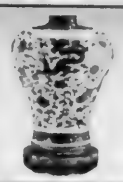

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Ohad Nakash Kaynar: U.S. peace plan is promising

RON CSILLAG
rcsillag@thecjn.ca

Ohad Nakash Kaynar is the deputy head of mission at Israel's Embassy in Ottawa (Ambassador Nimrod Barkan departed late last year and has not yet been replaced). A graduate of Tel Aviv University's Middle East studies program, he worked as a journalist for *Yedioth Ahronoth* and the *Jerusalem Post* before joining the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He served as deputy head of mission in Israel's embassies in Istanbul and Budapest and then became deputy spokesperson for Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs before assuming his current assignment last August.

Ohad Nakash Kaynar

Will the peace plan proposed by U.S. President Donald Trump hurt or help Israel's prime minister?

As diplomats, we are not servants of a particular prime minister but of all prime ministers and all parties in Israel, so I won't take a political stance on whether this is positive or negative for this party or that party.

It's a positive for Israelis, that's 100 per cent, and potentially, a positive for Palestinians as well. It depends on whether they finally reach out to join us at the negotiation table, where we've been waiting for them for a long time.

The proposal was widely criticized as a deal between the United States and Israel, leaving the Palestinians out. Can Israel use the deal to get Palestinians to the table?

I want to correct that: the Palestinians left themselves out. It wasn't the Americans. The Palestinians didn't come to the table more during the Obama days than they are during the Trump days. Palestinian rejectionism now has a price. That is the main point of the Trump peace deal. If they come to the table, they would have a very fruitful negotiation. There are some ideas in the plan that we assume are beneficial to the Palestinians and are not fantasy. They can occur. The issue is the rejectionism that has been going on since 1989.

People need to come to the table and negotiate if they have the will to have a state. When they're not there, then the chances that they will gain should be limited, and so far, there has been no U.S. president to take them to task for their rejectionism. Even Bill Clinton, if I'm not mistaken, put the blame on the Palestinians for their failure to negotiate then, but there was no price to be paid.

So what is the expectation that, as time goes by, they will receive more? That's not the way negotiations work in any other field. Why would it work that way now? If they feel that it's not good enough, they should come and negotiate for a better deal. But rejecting it altogether, that's a different story.

For the average Palestinian, this plan presents opportunity. I don't think it takes opportunity away from them. The question is: Is their leadership willing to move forward? Israel's work with the Palestinians over the last 10 or 15 years has been to make it a place where they actually have a good enough life so that they think before they want to throw it away. And this is coming into play now in the West Bank. It seems they feel they have something to lose, that they don't want to progress in a negative direction.

What can Israel do to improve its image in Canada?

We see Canada as an extremely friendly country, just as friendly as the United States. We work directly with the government here, with Global Affairs Canada, on topics that are of relevance to both countries.

We do innovation and public diplomacy work. We also do trade here. We are working very hard to promote these ties even further. We have the updated Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement that was put into place last September. It should bear more economic fruit.

We are working on more memorandums of understanding (MoUs), including a scientific MoU that we are hoping to promote during 2020. There are already quite a few MoUs in play, including on counterterrorism dialogue, where Israel is very beneficial to Canada. There are other areas where Canada is beneficial to Israel. I think that Canadian-Israeli relations are singular. They are principled and they are important.

There is a push on now to add Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) to Canada's list of terrorist groups. What else can Canada do on the Iran file?

I'm not sure that Canadians have a different role than the international community. You have your role and you're performing it quite well on several platforms. Iran needs to be contained by the whole of the international community. There are countries that are allowing it. I'll phrase this carefully — to evade some of its responsibilities. Canada's not one of those countries.

Canada is participating in coalitions and is very active. You have forces in Iraq these days. You are performing your duty. Could you do more? Maybe.

The IRGC is problematic. It's a terror entity. For us, there's no question about it. The listing of the IRGC as a terror organization is occurring in many countries right now. We feel it's a Canadian interest to do so. Also, when effective, we advocate for putting sanctions into play. We are on the Canadian side. We assume that Canada knows what it's doing. ■

This interview has been edited and condensed for style and clarity.

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Jews and the witch hunts of medieval Europe

RICHARD LEVY

One might have noticed that there has been a lot of talk in the American political arena of late about witch hunts. The template for this fraught activity is the Salem, Mass. witch trials of the 1690s, brought to life by playwright Arthur Miller in *The Crucible*.

However, the New World was a laggard compared to the witch hunts that swept over Europe much earlier, during the 15th to 17th centuries. They roared in parallel to the concurrent persecution of Jews, Conversos and other heretics. Sometimes these two currents converged into a single torrent of cruelty.

Those centuries in Europe were disfigured by constant war, violence, plague, and starvation. It was fertile ground for rampant superstition and projection of fears onto "Others." Jews and heretics, the principal "Others" in medieval Europe, who existed outside of the societal norms, were cast in the lead roles as sworn enemies of Christianity, roles that came to include witches.

In Spain during the 1300s, with the end of the era of tolerance that had permitted Christians, Jews, and Muslims to live side by side in relative harmony, the Jew became identified as the chief enemy of Christianity. After the massacres against Jews throughout Spain in 1391, Jews converted *en masse*. From then on, Spain's Jewish communities became smaller and more impoverished, as Spanish polemicists turned their hatred on the Jews, eschewing any real distinction between hidden and open Jews.

Outside Spain, trials of "witches" took centre stage. Most infamously, in 1431, Joan of Arc was burned alive in Rouen, a punishment reserved solely for witches and heretics (the implication being that a burned body could not be resurrected on Judgment Day).

However, in Spain, trials of witches were rare, although Spaniards were as concerned as other Europeans about the supernatural in their lives. As late as 1631, Gaspar Navarro published a thesis on superstition in which he explicitly accepted the reality of diabolical pacts, *maleficia* and the witch's sabbath. *Maleficia*, malignant acts, was thought to involve the use of the evil eye, various incantations, magical potions, hand of glory (grotesquely, the severed hand of a hanged criminal) and effigies to bring curses upon the subject. Its effects were repealed by various charms and potions made from herbs.

The rarity of witch trials in Spain was due to the prestige and power of the Holy Office of the Inquisition, which downplayed witchcraft and highlighted the evil of Jewish heresy. As Stephen Haliczer has written in *The Jew as Witch*, "The only thing that could account for Spain's relative inactivity in the face of the European witch craze was the presence in that country of another target of displaced aggression, a target so firmly identified in the public mind with all that was evil and pernicious that it could readily substitute for the witch as the ultimate source of social evil."

In a work published in 1628, the Jew/witch connection is made quite explicit. Jews and Conversos accused in the Santo Niño event (a fabricated kidnapping of a child for "Jewish ritual purposes") are depicted as fiendish, physically repellent creatures acting with the support of the devil to carry out his purposes in the world.

The 1690s were a time of great stress for the Pilgrims of Salem. There were no Jews in their colony, but there were plenty of marginalized vulnerable women, who were perceived, like the Jews of Europe, as associates of Satan. The Pilgrims believed that Beelzebub empowered women to inhabit the bodies of victims and transport spectres into their dreams. The trial judges, while learned in English law, accepted as proof of witchcraft the crazed contortions of the victims and their accounts of lurid nightmares. Torture elicited the best evidence – confessions by the accused and their naming of "fellow witches."

In our day, witch hunts and underlying superstitions have retreated before the Enlightenment values of reason, tolerance and the pursuit of verifiable truth. Those values also happen to be Jewish values and their societal practise is "good for the Jews." But those values are flipped upside down by politicians, particularly leaders of liberal democracies, who cry out that they are innocent victims of witch hunts, all the while shredding facts and vilifying the Others. ■

Richard Levy is a mediator and a lawyer. He lives in Montreal.

Dear Rabby

Love is accepting each other's shadow

Rabbi Yisroel Bernath

Dear Rabbi Bernath,

How well should I know someone before deciding to "get serious" or get engaged to them? Will there be a sign when I know them well enough?

Seeking a Sign

Dear Seeking a Sign,

Thanks for this question. I find it deceptively simple – there's a lot to unpack in a tiny question.

First of all, you're assuming that "knowing the other person" is the measure of your relationship. I'm pointing that out, not because it's a bad assumption, but because it's a bit unusual... maybe in a good way!

Most people would be asking, "When do I know I'm in love?" They'd assume that some sort of emotional state is the prerequisite to be "ready." And in a sense, they'd be right.

But according to Hasidic philosophy – with a few notable exceptions – an emotion is positive only when it's born of the mind. In other words, if you have an inexplicable emotional bond with someone – you love them without really knowing them – then you might be infatuated, and that's not good for the long term.

Infatuation means that you're in love with who you imagine the other person to be. But one day, maybe even 10 or 20 years later, you'll wake up to the fact that they're not the person you imagined. This pretending, if it happens, is usually mutual. As a matter of fact, you might even be imagining who you are, or allowing their (false) image of you to define who you are.

True love comes from knowing the other person, and them knowing you. So how much knowledge is enough?

Before I answer that directly, I'll take the opportunity to emphasize something that you've brought up: dating is not (just) having a good time. That's how it starts, and it's super-important to have a good time together. But dating progresses by getting to know the other person, and that means having solid conversations about yourselves.

I feel like most people, once they've gotten past the "we enjoy each other's company" phase, move directly into a closer relationship, or maybe it even gets physical. This is a mistake, because it circumvents the process of you actually having a serious conversation together. What is their philosophy towards life? What do they believe in? What do they value? Some married couples I meet can barely answer these questions about each other – that's not a good sign.

But if you focus on having these conversations – and if you both know yourselves well, and you're both honest – you may only need five, 10 or 20 hours of purposeful conversation. That's all it takes.

So that's what's behind your question – your presupposition – and that's a lot. I wanted to point it all out for everyone reading.

OK, I'll get to the actual answer now ... finally.

Recently, during a relationships seminar, somebody asked a therapist whom I respect a lot, "What is love?"

(The room did break out into song at that point – but I digress.)

His answer fascinated me: "Love is freedom."

Love is when you can express the parts of yourself that are normally hidden – your shadow – and the other person does the same ... and you still accept each other.

So it's not a certain amount of knowledge that gets transferred in those 10 or 20 hours of serious conversation. At the end of the day, it takes a lifetime to get to know another person. As the venerable love researcher John Gottman famously concluded, curiosity is the key to a long marriage. You don't want to know everything.

It's a process, not a product, that needs to be proven. Are you comfortable showing your shadow to the one sitting across from you? Is the feeling mutual?

If you do it once or twice and they like it and want more, that's a good sign. I would even argue it's enough. You have a lifetime to learn the rest of who they are. And hopefully, even then, they'll still find ways to surprise you. ■

Have a question for Rabbi Bernath? Email him at rabbi@jewishndg.com

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Rzhevsky, Alexander	March 1, 2020	16 Clarkhill st
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Kauffman, Judith Lynn	March 4, 2020	673 Bnar Hill Ave
Kogan, Efim	March 8, 2020	8 Chelton Dr
Berman, Ruth	March 8, 2020	105 Harrison Garden Blvd
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Jimmy (Shimon) Lash	Mar 2/20	113 Rockford Road
Ann Schwartz	Mar 6/20	51 Baffin Court
Glenn Springer	Mar 4/20	2005 Bayview Avenue
Lawrence Sax	Mar 5/20	44 Charles St. West
Mollie Alexandroff	Mar 6/20	8 Burmont Road
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Sandra Sherman Levitt	Mar 8/20	914 Bathurst Street
Sidia Cowen	Mar 9/20	2 Karl Court
Dr. William Singer	Mar 8/20	1196 Stavebank Road
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—Rosanna Arquette's apology after alleging Israelis developed a coronavirus vaccine a year ago, which was concealed to profit later.

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Trending

A much scarier silent movie role

Mel Brooks starred in the first great viral video of the COVID-19 pandemic, and he barely even said a word during it. The man behind *Silent Movie*, among other comedy movie classics, stood behind a glass door as his son Max, 47, explained how he has to practise social distancing to avoid wiping out a whole generation of comedic legends: 93-year-old Brooks could give COVID-19 to 98-year-old Carl Reiner, who might then transmit it to 94-year-old Dick Van Dyke. Max Brooks, whose mother was the late actress Anne Bancroft, knew of what he spoke more than most: *World War Z*, his 2006 zombie apocalyptic horror novel, was about a viral plague infecting this planet.

Jewish influence in a memoir

Gal Gadot starred in the first terrible viral video of the COVID-19 pandemic, which began with her crooning John Lennon's "Imagine," inspired by a video of a quarantined trumpeter playing it in Italy. It segued into a montage of other wealthy celebrities taking a turn with the anti-materialistic lyrics. Somehow, comedian Sarah Silverman took this singing assignment as seriously as Natalie Portman did. Also appearing between millennials was TV's original Wonder Woman Lynda Carter, before her Israeli movie successor brought it back home. It provided the kind of cringe content that everyone who's worried about their own bank accounts could unite in being angry about.

From yeshivah studies to sex parties

Woody Allen had his memoir, *Apropos of Nothing*, cancelled four days after being announced. But it was read by *New York Times* columnist Bret Stephens: "Turns out, it's pretty good," he wrote. The book's author provides his side of the story about a 13-year relationship with Mia Farrow, and subsequent marriage to her adopted daughter, Soon-Yi Previn. It was Woody and Mia's son, Ronan Farrow, who sparked protests against Hachette, the company that also published his book on investigating celebrity sexual misconduct. His sister, Dylan Farrow, claims that she was molested by her father. ■

Compiled by Marc Weisblott of CJN Today, our email newsletter. CJNews.com/today.

Gematria

16

The number of Dead Sea Scroll fragments housed at the Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C., determined to be forgeries after an art fraud investigation.

400 pounds

The weight of a stone that fell in July 2018 from Robinson's Arch, in the egalitarian section of Jerusalem's Western Wall, which led to a recently completed restoration.

2,000

The age in years of a catapult stone returned to City of David National Park in Jerusalem, by the Israeli man who stole it 15 years ago, due to his fearing the end of the world.

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Letters to the Editor

Don't discount Dershowitz

I am disappointed with Benjamin Shinewald's column ("The diverging careers of Irwin Cotler and Alan Dershowitz," March 12).

On the basis of Dershowitz taking on high-profile clients like Jeffrey Epstein, Harvey Weinstein and Donald Trump, and appearing on Fox News, Shinewald has determined that Dershowitz is diverging from his noble path for justice. Friendly with Cotler, Shinewald does not even consult with him. Cotler remains very close to Dershowitz, and I have to believe he would not approve of this column.

By his own admission, Shinewald says he has never met Dershowitz nor does he "fork out cash to hear him rant and rave at some swanky black-tie gala." May I remind him that some of those "swanky galas" raise money for some of our most noble deeds in the world, and particularly in the Jewish community.

While I think it is gross to compare two individuals, both giants in the cause for justice, let me (unfairly) compare Shinewald to Dershowitz. No comparison!

Allan Cheskes
Toronto

The voice of a rebbetzin

As both a rabbi's daughter and a rabbi's wife, I read the Rabbi2Rabbi discussion on the role of the rebbetzin with interest (March 12).

My late mother, Rebbetzin Laura Schild, was the model from whom the traditional role of the rebbetzin can be defined. Although I don't come close to meeting her standards, and have also had a fulfilling career as a physician, I still appreciate being acknowledged as a rebbetzin.

If you would like to explore the rebbetzin's evolving role further, rather than having two rabbis discuss the issue, you might interview a variety of rabbis' spouses or even initiate a Rebbetzin2Rebbetzin column in *The CJN*.

Judith Weinroth
Toronto

Discrimination on vacation

The discrimination against the wealthy German Jewish Seligman family at a Saratoga hotel ("A turning point in American anti-Semitism," March 12) may have changed life in the late 19th century for the Jewish New York financial elite, but it was still prevalent here in Ontario well into the mid-20th century.

My late father, Philip Goldman, was the first Jewish pharmacist elected as president of the Toronto and then the Ontario Retail Pharmacists Association. I recall as a young boy the tension he and his colleagues felt at a June meeting at the Royal Muskoka Hotel ("select clientele only"). As a teenaged waiter at the very Jewish Gateway Hotel, I knew that the Bigwin Inn was off-limits.

Jewish summer resorts like Monteith Inn, Smiths and Muskoka Lodge all thrived due to the discriminatory practices of so many other hotels in Ontario and Quebec.

I suspect my father's success as a Jew leading these organizations (and later the Canadian Retail Pharmacists Association) was due to his superb speaking and interpersonal skills, which made him an "acceptable" Jew for that time.

Bernard Goldman
Toronto

Letters to the editor can be emailed to cjninfo@gmail.com. All letters must bear the sender's name, address and telephone number. We reserve the right to edit and condense letters.

The CJN

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In a special work-from-home edition of the Shmooze, Michael and Alex discuss how COVID-19 has affected Jewish institutions and ask whether Hunters, Amazon's new and very Jewish show, is worth binging during your self-isolation.

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Rabbi2Rabbi

Is COVID-19 a sign of God's ire?

Contemporary sensibilities reject a connection between illness and moral failure, but there is at least one such example in the Torah. How, then, are such passages to be interpreted, and what can be learned from a pandemic?

RABBI MICAH STREIFFER
TEMPLE KOL AMI, THORNHILL

RABBI ERIC GROSSMAN
AKIVA SCHOOL, MONTREAL

Death of the Firstborn by Gustave Doré
DORÉ'S ENGLISH BIBLE, PUBLIC DOMAIN

Rabbi Streiffer: This week, we mark two significant transitions on the Jewish calendar: we enter the month of Nisan, in which Pesach falls, and we begin reading the Book of Leviticus. Both of these transitions are, in a way, plague-related.

Around our seder tables, we will tell the story of the 10 plagues that God brought against the Egyptians, culminating in the awful *makat bekhorot* (death of the firstborn), which ultimately facilitated our exodus. And, in the middle of Leviticus, we will read about the plague of *tzara'at* (leprosy) and how it was dealt with in ancient times. In both cases, the plague or sickness is seen as a message or punishment from God

This idea is largely distasteful to modern people. We've all known too many good people who got sick to believe that God works in exactly that way. And yet, this is precisely the picture that our holy texts seem to paint.

How do you think we are supposed to understand these passages that describe sickness as a form of divine retribution or warning? Do you think there is another Jewish lens through which we can view a disease, or even a pandemic?

Rabbi Grossman: We need look no further than the Book of Leviticus itself.

It is true that the Book of Exodus presents plagues as a divine punishment, and the Book of Numbers identifies *tzara'at* as a vehicle for God's opprobrium, when Miriam is stricken with the disease after speaking ill of Moses. Leviticus, however, does not deem *tzara'at* a plague or a penalty, but rather describes it as a condition that is simply part of life.

In other words, Leviticus treats disease and death as part of the natural world – they may be undesirable and unwished for, but they are not, in and of themselves, indications of moral failure. This view of sickness and pestilence is consistent with contemporary science and modern sensibilities.

It is interesting, however, that our sages chose to ignore this bona fide biblical theology in favour of seeing all *tzara'at* as a sign of sin. Do you think there is a reason or value in traditional rabbinic theology having gone in this direction?

Rabbi Streiffer: In good Jewish fashion, I have two answers to your question: no and yes. On one hand, I find the idea of reward and punishment, as presented in Deuteronomy and classical rabbinics, really challenging. I think it is theologically presumptive to think that we can explain God's reasons for what happens to us.

I'm reminded of Rabbi Harold Kushner, who asserts in his book *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* that "A better question would be 'Now that this has happened to me, what am I going to do about it?' " That kind of thinking is an admittance that we can't always explain the suffering in our world. What we can do is band together to support one another.

But on the other hand, maybe there is something to the idea that our diseases and plagues are a sign that something is amiss. When we are diagnosed with diabetes or cancer, we often look to our lifestyle to understand some (though not all) of the reasons for the sickness.

If we look deeply, there may well be lessons in our current coronavirus crisis as well – about the pace of modern life, the overpopulation of the planet and the availability of health care. When crisis hits, it can be an opportunity to reprioritize our values.

Rabbi Grossman: In a period of anxiety and pain, I believe it is a dangerous business and an inauspicious time to ascribe cause, assign blame, learn lessons or even consider positive outcomes. As the Talmud suggests, "We desire neither this suffering nor any reward that it brings."

I turn instead to God's assurance that He will never let tragedy endure. Leviticus describes, in exhaustive detail, pestilence and destruction that exceed the worst we can imagine. And yet, the Almighty pledges to put an end to our tribulations. Even during the worst periods of distress, God's message is that suffering is temporary and that good times will return again. ■

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Bet on the human spirit's will to endure

At one point late last week, as we were putting this edition of the paper together from various perches in Ontario, Quebec and Manitoba, the server went down at *The CJN*'s head office north of Toronto. "First a plague, now a blackout," someone lamented on our Facebook Messenger thread

the way we are staying in touch in the age of social distancing (replacing the old method of shouting across the newsroom). While we were waiting to see if and when the power would come back on, it was suggested that one of us smear some sheep's blood on the office doorframe. Just to be safe.

Natan Sharansky, who knows a thing or two about being stuck inside, was asked recently for his tips on staying productive during isolation. "Find something to do in your head," he suggested, among other things. "For me, that was chess – I played hundreds of games in my head. This ensures that you don't deteriorate intellectually." In a similar vein, I'm well on my way to playing hundreds of rounds of a new game that's sweeping the nation: how long will this art/math/Lego/reading project keep the kids occupied?

A) Five minutes – long enough to send and reply to two work emails.

B) Twenty minutes – long enough to edit a page of the paper and make a phone call.

C) How are they already bored?!

Unfortunately, the result is always the same.

Honestly, I don't really know what to do right now other than joke. The alternative is to get lost in the deep anxieties of these times. If anything, having the kids at home is forcing me to tear myself away from the news and focus on the things that I can actually, actively accomplish. (Having a new puppy that requires walks is also proving helpful – kudos to my wife for breaking down a few months back and letting me get one.)

The only other thing I really know how to do these days is work with the amazing team that brings you *The Canadian Jewish News* each week. Watching everyone – from the reporters, editors, designers and producers to the sales and marketing departments and frontline staff – come together to make sure this week's paper got done remotely was inspiring. Next week, we plan to be back with tips for Passover in quarantine, along with our annual literary supplement. Suffice it to say, it'll be thick enough to keep you occupied through four glasses of wine (at the seder, of course).

Beyond that – well, I suppose it's not easy these days for any of us to look too far into the future. But as we head into an auspicious time of the year, when the Jewish nation grabbed hold of its destiny amid a most extraordinary set of circumstances, it bears remembering that we – Jews and all of humanity – have overcome challenges before. And if nothing else, the words that conclude many haggadot always ring true: Next year in Jerusalem. ■ — YONI

Dear Readers,

In these uncertain times, we want to keep you as informed as possible. That's why we are offering free digital subscriptions to *The CJN* for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Plus, for up-to-the-minute news, sign up for our CJN Today newsletter here: **CJNews.ca/today**

In the meantime, we are hard at work – from home! – continuing to bring you blanket coverage of the coronavirus and the Jewish community. We intend to keep publishing in print every week, and our website is constantly updating. In the event of a disruption with our printers or distributors, we will provide further updates.

We thank you for your support in these extraordinary times. Stay safe. Stay strong.

Sincerely,
The CJN Team

From the Archives

What's your favourite matzah?

ONTARIO JEWISH ARCHIVES, BLANKENSTEIN FAMILY HERITAGE CENTRE, UJA FEDERATION OF GREATER TORONTO

Pictured is an unidentified group gathered for a seder in Toronto, 1974. The photo clearly identifies the Aviv Israel brand of matzah and Carmel wine. Contact us ojainquiries@ujafed.org if you can help identify the guests. Photograph by Graphic Artists. United Jewish Welfare.

SeeJN

Welcome home

TOMER NEUBERG/FLASH90 PHOTO

Israelis at Ben Gurion airport on March 20 wait to greet loved ones who are returning home from São Paulo, Brazil, after being stranded in South America.

COVID-19

Teaching in the age of self-isolation

Zev Steinfeld

I lay awake last Thursday evening, feeling anxious and uncertain, in a word: terrified. Earlier that evening I was supposed to be at the Toronto Maple Leafs game with my daughter, her first time. Then the season was postponed and instead, I was sifting feverishly through my texts, awaiting word from my employer, TanenbaumCHAT – where I teach classes in Tanach and philosophy, and my children's school – about what the next few weeks were going to look like.

I love teaching. It is truly a rewarding profession. One of the reasons I enjoy it is the nature of the classroom experience. No matter what noise is going on outside the classroom, no matter the news, the sports scores, the errands waiting to be run, when I close that door and see 25 bright, eager, young faces, there is a palpable energy.

It is an opportunity to tune out the noise – put the phones away, no more Snapchat or Instagram for the next hour – and just focus on a single, solitary goal. It may be comprehending a specific sentence in the Tanach, or examining conflicting approaches in the commentaries. It may be grappling with the nuances of Immanuel Kant or Jean-Paul Sartre or Jeremy Bentham, or discussing Iyov's approach to theodicy and seeing how it compares to Peter Weir's film *The Truman Show*. Or maybe comparing the Beastie Boys' song "Shadrach" to the Book of Daniel. The classroom engages the mind. It is a sanctuary for the cerebral and thought-provoking that allows us to mute distractions and exercise our minds.

I went to school Friday morning to pick up books and pack up anything I might need. The school was going to remain accessible to staff, but we didn't know for how long. I saw scattered students at their lockers packing up, too. One intrepid student was filling a small bottle with hand sanitizer at one of the school's wall-mounted stations. Clever.

SHUTTERSTOCK PHOTO

Education is a privilege. As I packed my bag with binders and notes, I recalled my travels with students to remote parts of Ecuador and Kenya. We met with local students who walk miles each day just for the thrill of accessing education. Back home, when my students ask to be let out of class early, I remind them that every moment we have together is a precious gift we should not squander. Not to mention the financial sacrifice and investment made by their parents. They roll their eyes.

I love what I do, and I will miss it. Despite the digital tools we have at our disposal, nothing can replace the classroom experience: the focus, the energy and the unpredictability. But the comfortable confines of the physical classroom are no longer viable.

Are we ready to jump headfirst into the digital age with intuitive media that can recreate a collaborative environment with the click of a button?

I've been teaching for 15 years – this should be easy. So why am I so nervous? Over Shabbat, I had time to think it through, leading to a whole list of new concerns: what if the technology fails? What if my tech-savvy students roll their eyes at my ineptitude? What if I talk too loudly or too softly? Or make funny faces into the camera? Will my energy translate through a screen? Will the students be engaged? Will they be chatting privately while they stare at their screen counting down the minutes? I haven't felt nerves like this going into a classroom in a long time.

The first class was more successful than I thought. Notwithstanding students who had connectivity issues, in general, participation was good. But after a few more classes, I'm feeling stiff. When I teach in a class, I have space, and I can be dynamic in that space. I can move. Being attached to the screen has forced me thus far to be relatively immobile. I can feel the *shpilkes* setting in.

And yet, it is striking to see how some students who are reluctant to participate in a traditional classroom setting are much more willing to participate online. Meanwhile, the same urges that exist in a traditional classroom, operate online – the urge to socialize, and to be social. Every student expressed regret at not being able to get together – in person – with friends. There are reports from other teachers of students "crashing" lessons and disrupting. Was Kohelet right? "*Ein chadash tachat hashemesh*. There is nothing new under the sun."

Online, students can augment their background, or rotate their screens. I wonder whether I should disable the video feature, or whether that would defeat the point of doing an online lesson. Do I support my students' creativity and their comfort level with the software? Or lament that their immaturity is showing even here? What's to stop them from simply muting my lesson and talking to each other while I am oblivious?

Will I be able to reach my students teaching remotely? There are still more questions than answers. ■

Zev Steinfeld is a teacher in Toronto.

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Shuls adapt to the coronavirus

Synagogues explore online options, while funeral homes limit their services.

ALEX ROSE
arose@thecjn.ca

As synagogues across Canada shut down due to the coronavirus, rabbis, clergy and shul administrators are figuring out the best ways to fulfil the needs of their congregants, while still adhering to public health guidelines.

Some of the solutions have been relatively simple, such as moving learning sessions online. In some cases, the solutions can only make up for a fraction of what people are losing by forgoing communal events and in-person interactions. And in others, the recommended solutions are exposing Jewish people to new ways to explore and fulfil old obligations.

On March 15, Beth David B'nai Israel Beth Am Synagogue in Toronto made the decision to cancel all services, said shul president Andy Pascoe. He said that even though there were no formal orders to cancel services at the time, the decision became clear to the shul's leadership as they observed what was happening in the community as the number of cases grew, especially among the elderly.

"We just felt that it was better to be safe than sorry," he said. "Particularly because in one of our daily services, we have a large number of seniors and we just felt that ... it just was not worth the risk."

Pascoe said that every step Beth David has taken over the last few weeks, from emphasizing hand hygiene and social distancing, to cancelling programs and food services, to eventually cancelling all services and closing the building, has been met by support from the congregation.

To help fulfil the spiritual and religious needs of its members, Beth David has decided to offer classes and services online. It held its first Torah learning session on the morning of March 17, and Pascoe said about 50 to 60 people joined the call as the shul's ritual director led a session on social responsibility.

Pascoe said the shul is also providing resources on a wide variety of issues, and that clergy are available to the congregation by both phone and email. Additionally, Beth David started what Pascoe called a "calling tree" who would be reaching out to the shul's members to make sure they are okay.

Rabbi Daniel Korobkin

"Thank goodness, the technology supports it now. If it had happened 10, 15 years ago, when we didn't have these kinds of online capabilities to use in these kinds of circumstances," Pascoe said. "We're fortunate that even seniors are online and can take advantage of opportunities to connect, even if they are isolated. That's the thing we're principally concerned about, is people being isolated."

Rabbi Daniel Korobkin at Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto (BAYT) said he is most concerned about how to handle life cycle events.

"The regular prayer services, people will learn how to get by without them temporarily," he said. "The life cycle events that are the most challenging are the bar mitzvahs and the weddings and the funerals."

He said that thankfully nobody in the shul has passed away since the coronavirus necessitated the changes, and that in the event of a death BAYT has recommended people send their respects over telephone or by video calls. However, BAYT does have a bar mitzvah scheduled for next week and another a few weeks later.

"It's very challenging for a family, and especially for the young man, who's supposed to be reading from the Torah, celebrating in the midst of a large congregation and feeling that love and having the candies thrown at him after completing this

> "The life cycle events that are the most challenging are the bar mitzvahs and the weddings and the funerals."

really herculean task," he said. "What we're dealing with now is telling the family that they can only gather immediate family together to get just the very bare minimum minyan of 10 men."

Rabbi Korobkin's own son is about to get married. The wedding was supposed to take place in Canada, he said, but his son is stuck in Los Angeles. Even if he had been able to make it to Canada, the celebrations would have been greatly reduced. Ontario Premiere Doug Ford said all gatherings need to be 50 people or fewer, but Rabbi Korobkin said BAYT is taking it even further. They are limiting weddings to a maximum of a minyan, and had to shut down a wedding in the shul on the night of March 17.

"We feel that it would be irresponsible at this point to allow any gathering over the very, very basic minimum of 10, of a minyan," he said. "And we're not even allowing that for basic prayer services."

With the cancellation of prayer services, Rabbi Korobkin said some grieving people have expressed disappointment at their inability to say the *Kaddish*. But there are other ways of fulfilling the same obligation, he said.

"The purpose of *Kaddish* is to affect an elevation for the soul of the loved one who's departed. And certainly, there's no elevation ... if you're endangering people's lives," he said.

"So, what we recommend instead for people to do is to learn Mishna and to say paragraphs of the Psalms."

The words of the Kaddish prayer are not about the deceased, but about exalting God. That's because in the Jewish tradition, Rabbi Korobkin said, when the loved one of someone who has departed performs a virtuous action, they create benefit for the soul - and that's especially true of a child.

"The soul sort of gets more merit, I suppose, because they left (behind) a child or a loved one who is acting virtuously, and therefore, the *Kaddish* is simply a declaration of a virtuous deed of crying out God's name and making it more known in the world," he said.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

The *Kaddish* became the standard form of expressing virtue from a midrash about children who lost parents and didn't know what to do, Rabbi Korobkin said. Rabbi Akiva told the children to say the *Kaddish* to show they care about God and want to publicize His name in the world. From that midrash, it spread to everyone saying *Kaddish* to elevate the souls of their loved ones.

"But that can be accomplished without the formal *Kaddish* prayer. It can be accomplished by studying Torah. It can be accomplished by reciting the Psalms, and can actually even be accomplished by acting virtuously," he said.

But congregations are still missing out on all the other positive aspects of communal prayer services. Many shuls have been moving their services online. At Dorshei Emet, a reconstructionist synagogue in Montreal, they even hold online prayer services for Shabbat. Rabbi Boris Dolin says it's important to maintain a sense of community in a situation like this, perhaps even more important than usual.

"I feel it's times like this when the power of community really comes through. As a Reconstructionist, I believe that religious aspects of community life are definitely very important, but just the fact that we are a community of support that can be here together and can use Jewish tradition to help guide us through times of crisis is what's shining this week," he said.

On March 16, the Toronto Board of Rabbis released a public letter offering guidance for funeral and shivah observance. They are advising that funerals should be graveside, limited to the innermost circle of loved ones and be by invitation only. They also said that shivahs should be private and that those wishing to offer condolences do so by phone or some other means of communication.

The night before the letter was released, Benjamin's Park Memorial Chapel had already made the decision to cancel all chapel services and limit funerals to graveside only, with a maximum of 50 people, said Michael Benjamin, president of the funeral home. The decision went into effect on March 17. And so far, families have all supported it, he said.

"The interesting thing is that many families had come to this conclusion a couple of days ago and that's what they were asking us to do for them," he said.

Benjamin said that they had made the decision to help keep staff safe and limit the number of people who enter the building as much as possible, while still doing whatever possible to provide a necessary service to the community.

"The most direct service that we provide is caring for the dead. So that's something that must go on, and you can't stop. When somebody dies, they have to be dealt with," he said. "But in addition to that, we are in a unique position, as a Jewish funeral home, to provide the religious and cultural support that our tradition dictates."

However, when it comes to that support, a lot may change in the next little bit, Benjamin said. But as the Jewish community navigates how to deal with the loss of these traditional supports, it's important to figure out to fill the void their loss will create.

"With these things being taken away, we're going to have to look very quickly to try to find a new way over this crisis to be supportive of the community so that we don't create an additional problem," he said. ■

Jewish schools move learning online

PAUL LUNGEN
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Day schools may be closed, but the learning goes on.

Fear of the coronavirus has led to the closing of public and private schools across Ontario, but a group of Toronto Jewish day schools have come up with a co-ordinated plan to continue educating their students online.

A similar approach was taken in the nation's capital, where Torah Day School of Ottawa (TDS), which serves kids from kindergarten to Grade 8, switched to an e-learning model for all students.

And in Montreal, JPPS-Bialik, Solomon Schechter Academy and Hebrew Academy, among other schools, announced they too were closing their doors and switching to online learning.

In a letter to parents dated March 13, 10 day school administrators in Toronto stated, "We are committed to doing everything we can to mitigate the impact this decision has on our students. Our respective schools will be implementing alternative educational programming conducive to preserving the health of students and staff. Schools will individually communicate the distance-learning plans in the coming days."

The letter is signed by representatives of Associated Hebrew Schools, Bialik Hebrew Day School, Bnei Akiva Schools, Montessori Jewish Day School, Netivot HaTorah Day School, Paul Penna Downtown Jewish Day School, Robbins Hebrew Academy, TanenbaumCHAT, the Leo Baeck Day School and the Toronto Heschel School.

Virtual classes have already begun at CHAT, said Jonathan Levy, head of school. The school is employing the Zoom digital platform, a virtual meeting place to which students log in, connect to their teachers and take the classes according to their regular schedules.

"We are trying to mirror their regular schedules. Students are expected to attend and pay attention," Levy said. "All classes students have taken will continue."

The software allows not just for online lessons, but for other school activities, such as a virtual "jersey day" and a lunchtime online cooking class. There's even a way for teachers and staff to stay "in touch with students to see if they're OK from an emotional point of view," given concerns over the COVID-19 virus, Levy said.

Speaking one day after the program launched, Levy said the feedback from parents has been positive, though he acknowledged that, as with any new program, there could be glitches.

"I think we got off to a wonderful start," he said.

Ora Shulman, head of school at Associated Hebrew Schools, said, "We are making every effort to follow the scope and sequence of our full curriculum program through our distance-learning program.

"Teachers have been trained to use a variety of different platforms for live video-conferencing, as well as platforms to pre-record lessons and videos for asynchronous learning (according to the student's schedule).

"We are doing our best to provide a balanced program to meet all the needs of our learners," she said.

TDS in Ottawa told parents that its "new learning model is being rolled out gradually, with fully online classes expected to be running by next week." Under that plan, teachers will email lessons and assignments to students daily.

Among the learning strategies being employed are "posting video lessons, having students record audio or video responses, and individually calling students at home and working with them one-on-one."

Like CHAT, TDS teachers will utilize Zoom, as well as Google Classroom, along with FaceTime and email, "to create interactive and engaging ways for students to continue learning while the school is physically closed," the school announced.

Shulman and Levy both said they expect students would complete the school year on time, despite the disruptions, without the need to stretch the academic year into the summer.

In fact, there is hope that regular classes at the Toronto schools will resume on April 20, after the scheduled Passover break. However, that will depend on how the situation evolves in the interim. ■

THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
MARCH 26, 2020

Do you need a face mask to read this column?

Rabbi Asher Vale

> *Concern for others shouldn't be restricted to trying periods.*

By the time you read this column the COVID-19 pandemic will be over. That is actually wishful thinking on my part. The best-case scenario is that we will have flattened the curve - a new term to come out of this crisis – as a result of people taking appropriate precautions. Our collective efforts will have hopefully minimized the impact of this horrible plague.

I am writing this column while in self-isolation, another new expression in our lexicon. When we left last week for the United States to visit our grandchildren (and their parents), Ohio was not yet declared by our government to be a hazardous place. That reality changed in the course of two days. We should have known the cosmos was shifting when they closed the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame during our stay.

It's not necessary for you to wear a mask to read this piece. At the same time, those of you who are among the small percentage of people to give me negative feedback about some of my views, feel free to hold your noses.

A lot of Jewish insights into the crisis have been popping up on social media. Most are serious, but some are funny. It's important to maintain one's sense of humour at the same time as the situation is approached with the appropriate severity. There were even jokes during the Holocaust. I came across an old book on Jewish humour in which it told about a person who declared that Hitler would die on a Jewish holiday. When asked how he could be so certain, the man said that whatever day the Fuehrer perished on would be a Jewish holiday.

All kidding aside, a reflective way of looking at this current threat is to focus on the type of questions we have been asking ourselves. Did I come into contact with that woman who tested positive? Did I shake hands with that man who is showing symptoms? How long ago was it that I was in the same room as that person who isn't feeling well? If I go into that store will I be able to avoid coming within a few feet of any of the other customers? And what about the sales clerk, has she been exercising proper caution?

What these questions show is that we are right now very focused on other people. But it shouldn't only be in a negative way. We can inquire if our neighbours are all right, especially those in isolation. We can find out if the elderly couple down the block needs someone to buy groceries for them. Maybe there's a lonely person who would appreciate a call or an e-mail.

Of course, concern for others shouldn't be restricted to trying periods. Even in the best of times there are people who would appreciate our assistance or just hearing from us. In the same way that we're now looking over our shoulders for people who could potentially harm us, we can always be on the lookout for those who we can help.

Social distancing – a third new phrase – has created challenges, as we seek to avoid large groups and not engage in physical contact with people outside of our immediate family. The positive side is that it forces us to put more thought and effort into connecting with others in a meaningful way. The determination to move away may just be a way of bringing us closer together.

The COVID-19 pandemic will, God willing, disappear soon with minimal cost to people's lives and health. When it's over, we shouldn't just be left with an expanded vocabulary. Hopefully the whole horrendous experience will have helped us to appreciate one another. ■

How to survive these strange times

A sealed-off playground by the beach in Tel Aviv on March 18, following the government's instructions to avoid public spaces, as the number of those infected by the coronavirus keeps growing. PHOTO BY MIRIAM ALSTER/FLASH90

Mordechai Ben-Dat

These words were written shortly after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau addressed the nation some 10 days ago, advising us of the further sweeping measures the federal government and agencies throughout the country would implement in an effort to "flatten the curve" of the spread of the coronavirus pandemic in Canada.

In our homes and in our hearts, the mood is one of anxiety and gloom. Most places where people delight in gathering are closed. Schools are without students. Streets are mostly empty of individuals. Houses of worship are closed to worshippers.

The countless intersections and personal interactions of everyday "ordinary" life that provide the multi-hued textures to all of our lives must be avoided. We keep our distance from neighbour, stranger and even loved ones.

The situation is surreal and eerie. Can this truly be happening in the year 2020?

How do we keep ourselves, our family and our community from harm's way without displaying undue alarm to the ones we are trying to protect? How do we preserve our own humanity without surrendering to selfish self-interest? How do we adapt to these imperative rules of enclosure and curtailment without excessive emotional disquiet?

As we navigate through the viral darkness, perhaps we can look to some words of clarity and inspiration written by Viktor Frankl, one of the last century's most influential and thoughtful psychiatrists. Although he authored a number of works, the small manuscript that he wrote in 1945 about his horrific experiences in Nazi concentration camps, *Man's Search for Meaning*, has had a lasting positive effect on the lives of millions of readers. In the preface to the 2008 edition of this work, Rabbi Harold S. Kushner referred to it as "one of the great books of our time," one uniquely capable of changing a person's life. It is a remarkable treasure of insight and strong, bold writing.

In one of those calendar coincidences that are pleasant to contemplate, the publication date of this edition of *The CJN*, March 26, happens to be the anniversary of Frankl's birth in 1905. He died in 1997. The serendipity of the date makes seeking his guidance during these difficult days more emphatic.

"Man needs something for the sake of which to live," Frankl said. He taught that life is intrinsically meaningful. Human beings are not merely the combined collections of our respective electrical synapses, biological infrastructure and genetic predispositions.

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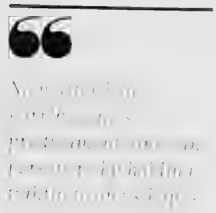


We respond to the stirrings of what can least scientifically be referred to as the soul

No matter how horrible one's predica ment, one can persevere by holding tightly to one's hopes and aspirations He observed that those who managed to survive the camps, often did so because they clung to an image, perhaps even a mirage, a triumphal vision of themselves in a restored future either with people they loved dearly or involved in gratifying, meaningful work.

Frankl vividly described how recalling the image of his wife during a forced morning march helped him to push through the horror of his situation. One of the most important transformative experiences strengthening individuals to help them endure hardship, he believed, is the love they feel for someone else. "Through our love," Frankl wrote, "we can enable our beloved to develop meaning, and by doing so, we develop meaning ourselves."

Frankl believed that we are the ultimate decision-makers over our lives. "Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms - to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way," he wrote.

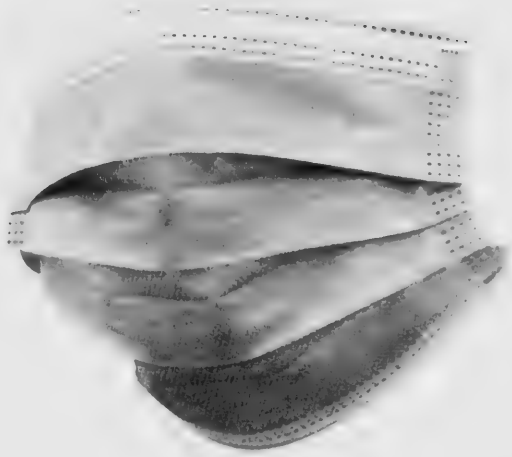
Social distancing goes against the deep grain of who and what we are as Jews. Judaism extols social engagement, namely, acting for the well-being of each other and for the wider community. And yet social distancing has now become the best way of preserving who and what we are.

In Frankl's terms, adopting the proper attitude and focusing on all that gives our lives meaning, can help us travel through the unknown that lies ahead. ■

Do you disagree with our columnists? Have your say by writing to **cjninfo@gmail.com.**

So many questions, so few honest answers

Norma Baumel Joseph



SHUTTERSTOCK PHOTO

What kind of calamity is this? These are surely strange times. There is no enemy at our doors, but the enemy surrounds us everywhere. Must I shun my friend, my cousin, my son? Who is safe and where am I secure? Do I need to buy supplies or is that just hoarding giving in to mass hysteria?

Where can I get honest answers?

This is unprecedented not just in our experience but globally and maybe historically.

We have never seen countries in lockdown, isolating citizens, fearful of communal gatherings, shuttering the elderly, banning sporting events. We in the Jewish world have long taught the "lessons" of our history, of our many persecutions, of the Holocaust. But the majority of us have never come close to experiencing the loneliness, abandonment and fear of contact that our elders knew. We might have sympathized but not understood; we have never come close to knowing such all-encompassing trepidation.

Now we might express such undefined anxiety and apprehension. Where is it coming from? Whom should I avoid? What can I do?

I do not mean to compare this epidemic with any horrors or traumas of the past. I am only suggesting that our current situation brings shadows of other extreme moments that we had talked about – perhaps with some hubris – but never truly known. Perhaps many of us sincerely believed it could never happen here. But now we are faced not with one local enemy, but with a global crisis. There is no real place to escape to, no immunity guarantee.

Our physical systems are not prepared, and for the first time in modern history no one nation has come forward to champion a team of the "good guys." There are no teams here. Is it really going to be every country on its own? Our universe seems ill-equipped: it cannot find a cohesive or integrated approach. Have we reached such a low point?

> *This is unprecedented not just in our experience but globally and maybe historically*

How can that be?

How will history record this moment in time and our responses to it? I wonder.

Will it be called the toilet paper affliction? Forgive me for joking, but in fact humour is necessary.

We must resolve the mere fact that these necessary but extreme precautions are increasing communal and individual distress. Many societies manage stressful times by joining in prayer or celebrations or just actual physical get-togethers. These social happenings are not easily replaced by virtual appearances. Humans require physical presence and contact.

Babies in orphanages who are not held and cuddled are often socially or intellectually deficient in numerous ways. Now that we are self-isolating, how will we socialize and express our humanity. Facebook does not provide stimulating, active friendships. How will we be a community? How will we express our care and love for each other?

I communicate with my children and grandkids by phone and Facetime frequently. But that in no way replaces our need to be in close physical proximity, to kiss and hug and share food together. I need to be with them.

I need to see my husband who lives in a long-term care residence. Just today, thanks to a wonderful caring staff member, I was finally able to contact him by Facetime. The government locked his home down. No one, no family members or aides are allowed in. I understand the need and decision to keep these highly vulnerable people protected. But he is lonely and confused by my absence. And the wonderful staff are overworked. How will they manage without the aides and family members who fulfil many functions? How will our "protected" vulnerable residents survive?

And how will we entertain ourselves? The absence of sports on TV will further exacerbate the boredom and loneliness factor. Given all this housebound intense family living, expect an increase in domestic violence.

How can we cope?

So many questions. It is so frightening not knowing. Perhaps that is the biggest tragedy. Not knowing what this is, how long it will last, who will live and who will die?

These age-old questions, present in our Rosh Hashanah liturgy yet always current as they plague us especially now. ■

THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
MARCH 26, 2020

Ban on visitors to institutions causes dismay

JANICE ARNOLD
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Beverly Spanier

Maimonides Geriatric Centre

Mount Royal MP Anthony Housefather is urging those opposed to the Quebec government's ban on visitors to all hospitals, public long-term care institutions and seniors' residences to write to Premier François Legault with their concerns.

Housefather thinks the ban may be too far-reaching and is calling for a "softening" of restrictions.

The indefinite ban, instituted on March 14 as part of the province's emergency measures to slow the spread of the coronavirus, has caused distress among loved ones. The following day, a small demonstration was held outside the Maimonides Geriatric Centre by relatives and others who fear the total ban will do more harm than good.

Not only are residents being deprived of crucial emotional support, but the practical help that the private care workers hired by many residents is vital, they say. Relatives often provide a lot of care themselves to relieve what they see as chronic understaffing.

Housefather, whose father is a resident of Maimonides, posted on his Facebook page that he has received "heartbreaking texts and emails and calls from relatives of those in hospitals and long-term care facilities…

"I have heard from many who fear that without their caregivers their loved ones will not be properly fed or cared for given the already impossible burdens placed on health care staff…

"The very laudable objective of protecting vulnerable seniors is well-intentioned. But knowing that on the ground many of these seniors will not be properly cared for as an overwhelmed staff suddenly has to deal with an absence of caregivers and relatives means to me that this well-intentioned action is not the right course."

He suggests the wearing of gowns and masks, or, for hired caregivers, the requirement that they be approved by the local health authorities.

"I will keep trying on my end and encourage everyone else to email the premier and Quebec Minister of a Health Danielle McCann and explain your specific situation."

The premier has said exceptions might be made in end-of-life situations.

Côte St-Luc councillor and lawyer Dida Berku, whose mother is at Maimonides, said while the staff is very dedicated, "there is no way they will be able to provide the level of care that the patients rely upon. Companions and family help the residents dress, eat, walk and move about, and assist them in every way. Staff will soon burn out.

"My mom has already called me crying and she is still more independent than most. It's a very precarious situation. I'm sure they will find a way to ease up on this restriction, as it's just not sustainable."

Berku acknowledges that if COVID-19 infects these institutions, the residents are "doomed."

She suggests allowing "certified personnel" to tend to those who need it most.

The private workers fall into two main categories: those who are provincially certified personal support workers and less qualified companions.

Maimonides resident Beverly Spanier, a member of its users' committee, said the ban on outside help is putting a tremendous strain on the already overworked staff, who are trying "heroically" to fill the gap.

She fears the "cure" may be worse than the risk. "What has happened here could cause loss of life in numbers higher than the coronavirus."

Spanier estimates a third of Maimonides residents have some sort of private support.

"Unless the government is going to triple the amount of staff in these facilities, it will be a nightmare for everyone. The staff is showing us all the love they can; they know we are afraid. But can they do this on a long-term basis? I'm not sure."

She suggests checks could be put in place for workers each time they come in, attesting that they have not travelled or been in contact with an ill person, or even requiring gowns and masks.

On humanitarian grounds, she implores that loved ones be permitted to visit at least once a week briefly, following the same rules.

For herself, as a paraplegic, Spanier said she was dependent on the assistance of the certified workers she employed daily to have some "quality of life."

On another matter, Housefather is urging the thousands of Quebec "snowbirds" to return home now.

"I encourage everyone to (without panicking) do the things you need to do to close your winter residence, pack and return home to Canada as soon as you reasonably can.

"While Canadian citizens and permanent residents will always be able to enter Canada, we cannot control decisions made by commercial airlines to delay or cease travel or by foreign governments who may limit or suspend air travel with little warning."

One Montreal snowbird who heeded that warning is Sidney Margles.

He and his partner decided to drive home from Florida rather than fly. His vehicle had been shipped there when they came down a few months ago.

"We had planned to fly back next week. However, we had second thoughts about getting into a tube with 200 people, with perhaps even one infected person," he emailed en route in Savannah, Ga., on March 16.

Another Montrealer, Sid Birns, said he is sticking to his original plan to fly back on April 15.

"Century Village [in Deerfield] is a relatively safe place, we don't have people coming in from all parts of the world. Most of the snowbirds are heading home now and, of course, the year-round residents, well, they are here to stay," he emailed. ■

IN MEMORY OF

SALLY ROSEN Z"L

The Sarah and Chaim Neuberger Holocaust Education Centre, UJA Federation of Greater Toronto, extends our heartfelt condolences to the extended Rosen family on the passing of Sally Rosen, a Holocaust survivor and speaker at the Neuberger Centre.

May her memory be a blessing.

UJA FEDERATION of Greater Toronto | Sarah and Chaim Neuberger HOLOCAUST EDUCATION CENTRE

Stepping up to fight a global pandemic

SUSAN MINUK
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

With horror stories about COVID-19 spreading as quickly as the virus itself, Canadians are struggling to remain calm. But one Canadian is providing concrete ways to "show up" for those who may need an emotional boost.

"Many people feel asphyxiated by the unknowns. But there are pinpricks of light," said Kim Smiley, founder and CEO of the Empathy Effect. Empowering some 75 countries through social media, the Empathy Effect shines a light on the beauty and interconnection that crises or pandemics often catalyze.

"We are inspiring people to practise the #empathypledge, a promise to practise one act of empathy a day," explains Smiley. "We're trying to quell the fear through focusing on the beauty that still surrounds us."

UJA Federation of Greater Toronto, the hub of more than 100 organizations in the community, has launched a campaign to mobilize community members to get involved and support the most vulnerable

Ve'ahavta's goal is to keep their van program operating throughout the crisis, looking for people who are sleeping outside and providing them supplies.

people, who may not be able to shop for much-needed stores of food and cleaning supplies.

"We have set up a donation dropoff system at (the) Lipa Green (Centre), asking community members who want to donate to drop off either a kit that they have assembled themselves or just a box of supplies that they can spare," said Steve McDonald, UJA's vice-president of communications and marketing.

"We are working with our Jewish social service agencies to ensure that we have a safe and effective delivery mechanism to get these kits out to community members who are going to be confined to their homes. Volunteers are phoning vulnerable seniors, checking in to see how they are doing and we are looking to set up a hotline that people can call for assistance."

Every year, UJA raises funds for its Global Seder program, helping vulnerable Jews, locally and globally, to celebrate Passover in dignity. But this year is unlike any other year, due to the coronavirus. However, a donor has stepped in to provide additional support.

"We have received a phenomenal gift from the Krawczyk family. They have generously offered to match, dollar for dollar, donations up to $100,000, dedicated to help the most vulnerable in our community to help with the pandemic," said McDonald.

But the fallout from COVID-19 is more than just financial, as people, following public health authorities' recommendations, become more isolated.

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Agencies reaching out to the most vulnerable

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

"Anxiety thrives and grows when we have free time," said Leanne Matlow, a cognitive behavioural counsellor and founder of Mental Health Empowerment Day. "Parents should continue to get kids to bed and wake them up at their normal time.

"We really have to be cognizant of social distancing – you can't have a music group over at your house, it's actually irresponsible. You can teach your kids about charity. Go through your house and find things you don't need anymore and create a donation bag. It's really about finding the good in an uncertain situation. We can't forget that there is incidental learning – silly things, like taking things out of your cupboard and alphabetizing them, or baking and measuring and doing a craft or playing board games. It could be a scavenger hunt – go find something in the house that starts with an L."

Matlow encourages people to reach out to one another.

"It's a time to build community. Even though we are isolated, we can still help each other. FaceTime and Skype with friends and grandparents to stay connected."

UJA Federation of Greater Toronto packing boxes of donated goods in preparation for delivery to seniors and vulnerable community members during the COVID-19 pandemic.

> *It's really about finding the good in an uncertain situation*
>
> **Leanne Matlow, mental health advocate**

Matlow added that there is still beauty in the world to appreciate.

"There are still trees," she said. "You hear birds singing and you can feel the warmth of the sunshine. Seize that moment."

Ve'ahavta, the humanitarian social services agency that provides intervention programs for people who have been affected by homelessness, is calling out to the community.

"We are working with a very vulnerable population who have multiple health issues," said executive director Cari Kozierok. "We are asking people to donate gift cards to Tim Hortons so folks can buy something hot .... We are very fortunate we can wash (our hands) with soap and water any time we want, but the people affected by homelessness don't have bathrooms and soap to wash up. Hand sanitizers, especially the really small bottles, are things we could be distributing to help them stay safe. We are also asking people to go on our Amazon wish list."

Danielle Morris, founder of Hungry North of the GTA, a Facebook food-sharing group for Ontarians in North York, Thornhill, Richmond Hill, Aurora and Barrie, is helping those in need who don't have food or are locked down and can't get out.

"There's a tenet in Judaism that it's a sin to waste food," said Morris. "The premise is simple: If you have extra food, you post it. If you are in need, you post it and it gets delivered." ■

To learn how you can help, visit jewishtoronto.com/help-us-help-our-most-vulnerable.

Passover Food Drive
NCJWC Toronto

March 22 - April 2, 2020

All Who Are Hungry Come And Eat
-Haggadah

NCJWC Toronto's Passover Food Drive is the largest kosher holiday food drive in North America

Donate to help those in need this Passover

Individual & Corporate Sponsors Welcome. 416.633.5100 | www.PassoverFoodDrive.org

Facebook group and food drive providing help

ALEX ROSE
arose@thecjn.ca

In the 37 years that the National Council of Jewish Women of Canada, Toronto (NCJWC Toronto) has run its annual Passover food drive, the event has gone from supporting a small group of financially vulnerable people in the local Jewish community to around 2,000 boxes of food that were prepared for last year's drive.

This year was shaping up to be much the same as last, said Eva Karpati, president of the NCJWC Toronto. The preparation for the drive had started months ago, and everything was in place for the big day: the volunteers, the logistics, it was all coordinated. And then the coronavirus hit.

"All of a sudden, as in the rest of the world, we've been hit with this crisis, and we were suddenly faced with, 'how do we ensure the safety of the community?' That is the volunteers, as well as the recipients. This was a huge concern for us," Karpati said. "We're all volunteers, and we're suddenly faced with this huge task of making sure we meet health requirements. And we're really at the point of having to dismantle what we've been preparing for months because of feeling we might not meet safety needs and health needs."

On March 16, however, the UJA Federation of the Greater Toronto Area heard about the struggles of the food drive, and lent it their support. Karpati said they stepped up immediately as soon as they caught wind of the situation, offering to help with the logistics of packing and delivering the boxes for 3,000 people.

"They've been remarkable and fabulous," Karpati said. She also added that the need for the Passover food drive is even higher this year than usual because of the isolation necessitated by the pandemic.

"This gesture is not only something physical, but it's also an emotional tie-in and a sense of reaching out with kindness and caring. Each parcel is so profound on many levels," she said. "We've always believed this is such a great showcase of what the Jewish community is capable of and does for each other. And this just confirms and re-affirms our belief that things can happen despite crises ... that the community comes together, especially in times of greater need."

For more proof that the community comes together in times of crisis, one need only look online, where Zack Babins of Toronto started a Facebook group called

Zack Babins KAYLA ROBINS/ROBINS NEXT PHOTOGRAPHY

"KAVOD-19: Toronto Jewish Community Response to COVID-19." As of March 19, the group had nearly 6,000 members. Babins got the idea when he saw a similar group geared toward a broader Toronto response, and realized a Jewish-specific group would be valuable.

"The Jewish community has needs that the larger Toronto community doesn't. You can scroll through some of the posts and see a lot of them have to do with kosher food and where to find it these days, especially kosher meat. We also have a lot of people who are picking up supplies for elderly people and Holocaust survivors, which is not something that would get as much attention, I think, on a larger city-wide group," he said. "So, the Jewish community does have needs that are not always fully addressed with a one-size-fits-all approach."

Based on a perusal of the group page, it has been instrumental in connecting people in need with people who can help, providing information and resources for people stuck at home with kids or other dependents and just generally fostering a sense of goodwill and connection among the Toronto Jewish community.

For example, people have made posts about tutoring for students at home, sending birthday cards to kids who will be celebrating under quarantine and asking for names to include in the blessing for good health. There are also countless posts of people asking for extra food or supplies, and others with too much offering to share, and even a post on behalf of UJA asking for volunteers to help with the Passover food drive.

"The resilience of the Jewish community to turn around in this time of crisis and really come together in a big, big way, it's just astounding," Babins said. "It's really reinforced my belief that we're going to get through this. We're going to be stronger for it. It's going to hurt sometimes. But we will get through this and we will thrive once again." ■

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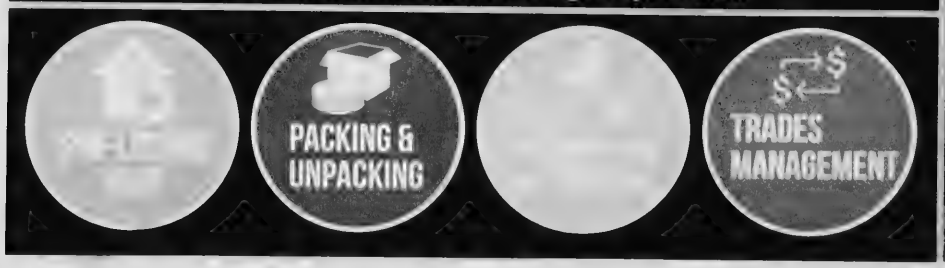

THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
MARCH 26, 2020

Guest Voice

What we can learn from Israel about coping

David A. Moscovitch

On March 7, I was with my family in Israel when a friend there alerted us to an urgent notification posted on the Israeli Ministry of Health website. a person who had been on our March 1 flight from Barcelona to Tel Aviv had been diagnosed with COVID-19. We were asymptomatic but we were now required by Israeli law to go into quar antine

During our brief time there, Israel never told its citizens to keep calm and carry on. Instead, the Ministry of Health rolled out an impressive website with an organized set of guidelines and directives that were updated constantly in Hebrew, Arabic and English. Every new case was published online and broadcast publicly, with a full report of all the places the infected person visited since the time of that person's presumed initial exposure to the coronavirus. Anyone in the country who had visited those places was legally required to self-isolate for 14 days, regardless of whether they were exhibiting symptoms. Specialized paramedic teams were mobilized to perform testing at symptomatic people's homes. Very quickly, tens of thousands of Israelis entered quarantine and the streets of Jerusalem became eerily quiet.

Thankfully, we had no symptoms. However, as tourists in Israel we had no place to self-quarantine. Both the Israeli health authorities and Toronto Public Health (TPH) encouraged us to return home ASAP. We asked our families in Toronto to stock our house with provi sions and begged a kind woman at the Ben Gurion Airport information desk for face masks. As we boarded the plane wearing our masks, we felt anxious. We wondered how the other passengers would have felt if they knew we were not wearing the masks to protect ourselves from them, but potentially to protect them from us.

In a pre-arranged plan, our parents drove two cars to Pearson International Airport and waited for us at the arrivals curb. When we approached, the driver of one car jumped into the other, leaving the former free for us to drive home. We blew them kisses and communicated our gratitude to them over the phone.

When we arrived home on March 8, we were shocked to learn that we were not actually required to self-quarantine. We were advised by TPH to self-monitor, but since we were asymptomatic, we were told that we could go about our normal routines in public and could even send our children back to school.

Rather than follow these TPH directives, we decided to exercise caution and adhere to Israeli guidelines. We stayed in quarantine while we gathered more information. People who heard our story told us they appreciated our decision to be "responsible citizens."

But why did we choose to be "responsible" and isolate ourselves even when we were advised that it was unnecessary? Upon reflection, the answer is simple: because we had been exposed to a stringent but pragmatic system in Israel in which self-isolation is mandated as an essential way to prevent potential infection before symptoms develop.

During these stressful and unprecedented times, we need to adopt a similar no-nonsense approach to combatting the virus. The key to controlling this pandemic lies in preventing the spread of the disease within the population Once symptoms are expressed, it is already too late. Let's work to change our behaviour and practise prudent social distancing even before symptoms develop. Let's educate our children about the importance of changing their behaviour. Let's use this as an oppor tunity to act in the best interest of both ourselves and others, including the strangers amongst us who may be most vulnerable to the effects of contracting the virus. Let's embrace a communal rather than individualistic mindset about the consequences of our actions on others: while for many of us, the implications of contracting COVID-19 would be mild, the consequences of transmitting the virus to others could be fatal. ■

David A. Moscovitch is a professor of psychology at the University of Waterloo who lives in Toronto with his wife and two children.

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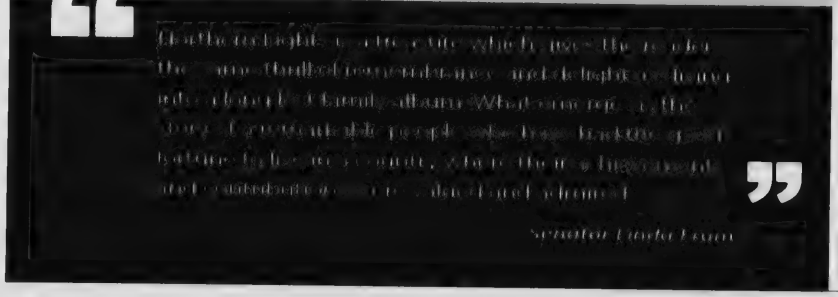

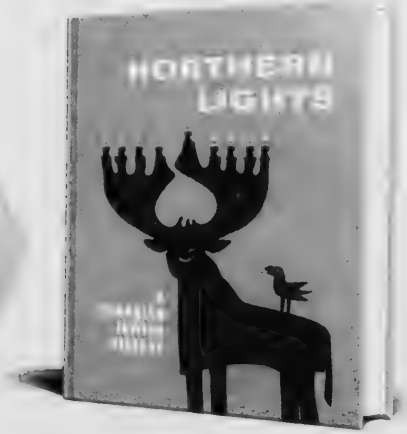

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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
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Consider Cincinnati, a community with 200 years of Jewish history

LINDSAY FRANKEL

Back in 2005, when my husband – a native Cincinnatian – and I started dating, one of the first things my Brooklyn-born father said was: "There are Jews in Cincinnati?" Fast-forward 14 years, and not only are there Jews in Cincinnati, but my husband and I live here with our three children, along with many other Jewish families.

In fact, Cincinnati is one of the oldest Jewish communities in America, dating back to 1817, and our Orthodox community here is strong and growing. There are three Orthodox shuls within easy walking distance, as well as numerous other Conservative and Reform congregations throughout the city.

When it comes to living an Orthodox Jewish lifestyle, things here are easier than most people would initially think. Multiple grocery stores offer a plethora of kosher options. For those who enjoy dining out, we have four kosher restaurants, plus multiple ice cream shops and a kosher donut shop. We have three Jewish day schools to choose from, with an average tuition per child of less than $10,000 (all figures USD), and because of the location of our Orthodox community, most families receive state-funded tuition scholarships of $4,650 per child.

Want to send your kids to overnight camp, or to study or travel in Israel, but the cost is just too much? Cincy Journeys – a project of our very generous Jewish federation – helps every child attend overnight Jewish camp and every young adult travel and learn in Israel, giving them the skills, experience and desire to become tomorrow's community leaders.

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Let's talk about housing. You can purchase a four-bedroom home on one acre (0.4 hectares) for under $500,000. In addition to that, the median annual property tax in Amberley Village, where we live, is under $6,000. Most major businesses and medical centres are all within a reasonable commute, with most driving a maximum of 20 minutes each way for work.

Tickets to sporting events in Cincinnati can often be purchased for just US$30.

There is a wide variety of activities for the weekend. For sports fans, we've got professional baseball, football and soccer teams, with tickets available at reasonable prices. Our state-of-the-art JCC offers youth and adult baseball, soccer and basketball leagues, indoor floor hockey and more. For the culture and theatre fans, the Aronoff Center in downtown Cincinnati offers a wide array of spectacular shows, including many Broadway favourites. Our downtown area is also host to the brand new Holocaust and Humanity Center, as well as many art museums and a fantastic children's museum. Amusement parks, bike trails, hiking trails, lakes, the Cincinnati Zoo and more are all a short distance away.

But don't just take my word for it – come and see for yourself! Our friendly and welcoming community is eager to meet you! ■

MOve2Cincy is now offering $600 for families interested in visiting to learn more about the Cincinnati Jewish community. Visit MOve2Cincy.org for more information, or contact MOve2Cincy@gmail.com.

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2

Hoarding, not supply, is causing kosher shortages

PAUL LUNGEN
plungen@thecjn.ca

In a supermarket in midtown Toronto, a man loads his shopping cart with dozens of packages of kosher chicken, leaving a single packet of thighs for the next customer.

It's three weeks before Passover and people would be stocking up anyway, but in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the concern that food might run out, people appear to be "panic buying."

Royi Flescher, the manager of Magen Meats, a kosher butcher shop in Thornhill, Ont., is seeing it in his own shop, but he's placing limits on what people can buy, making sure there's enough product for the next customer to enjoy.

"It's the biggest issue. People are hoarding," he said.

Flescher added that people are worried over supplies, but they shouldn't be, at least when it comes to chicken. The two Canadian suppliers of kosher chicken, Premier Kosher and Marvid, are working overtime to ensure that demand is met. Premier is operating five days a week and has implemented an "extra kill," shipping 40 cases per day to Magen Meats alone. So far, they haven't missed an order, though there was one day when supplies ran out before a new shipment arrived. And Marvid is "working around the clock" to supply the Toronto market. "That's not an issue at all," he said.

Beef, however, is another story, and Toronto suppliers would have been hard-pressed to meet demand in normal circumstances, let alone with the coronavirus pandemic wreaking havoc on people's psyches.

The main problem stems from the permanent closure of Ryding-Regency Meat Packers, one of the largest slaughterhouses in Ontario and a major supplier of kosher beef, Flescher said.

Last fall, the plant was closed by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) over food safety issues, with the expectation that it would clean up its act, literally. But in December, the CFIA cancelled outright Ryding-Regency's licence because it provided "false or misleading" test results about the presence of E. coli bacteria.

"We went into (the) Passover (buying season) with half the meat in the market that is usually around," Flescher said.

Top, empty shelves for non-kosher meat. Above, a supply of kosher chicken in Toronto.
PAUL LUNGEN PHOTOS

"Now, before the Passover rush, a lot of that meat has already been gone. It was a difficult situation to start with, but because of panic buying, the system is stretched to the limit.

"The phones are ringing off the hook. People are very nervous that there won't be enough meat for Passover," he said.

To deal with the surge in demand, Magen suspended its online sales, but people are streaming into the store. People are buying three to four times what the Top, ay would normally purchase, Flescher said, noting that on March 12 and 13, "we did two weeks' sales in one and a half days."

Despite the heightened demand, Magen hasn't raised its prices and Flescher has heard that other beef retailers have also kept prices constant, a far cry from his native Australia, where retailers have doubled the price of beef.

At the same time, rabbis from across the city have been calling on him to see if he could meet the demand of customers. To that end, Magen arranged the slaughter of 120 lambs "that we're bringing into the shop. If we have to, we'll do more. We can do up to 150 lambs per week."

Meanwhile, at the Metro supermarket at Lawrence Avenue West and Bathurst Street, whole kosher chickens were still available on March 18, though a nearby showcase for non-kosher poultry was empty.

Many other kosher-for-Passover products, such as juices and matzah products, seemed to be in good supply.

Toronto Kosher, a Bathurst Street retailer, proclaimed on its website that "our store is fully stocked. Thera are no product shortages."

In the midst of the COVID-19 panic buying, which has seen supermarkets stripped of paper products and canned goods, among other items, the Kashruth Council of Canada, which certifies most kosher products in Ontario, issued a statement addressed to kosher consumers:

"We've spoken with retailers and distributors in the city and they've assured us that ... Toronto will have plenty of food for Passover. There is no need to buy more than usual. What could cause a food shortage is if people buy more food than needed, which would disproportionately affect those who are unable to afford to stock up. If we all work together as a community and be mindful of one another, we will all have a happy and kosher Passover." ■

New findings released on Holocaust awareness

RON CSILLAG
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A new poll suggests that a "comfortable" majority of Canadians believe young people today are less aware of the Holocaust and its lessons compared to the past.

Most of the survey's 1,008 respondents agreed that teaching young people about discrimination and the Holocaust is important. Only a slight majority said young people are not taught enough about the Holocaust alone in school.

The analysis was conducted by Nanos Research on behalf of Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center (FSWC) and released this month. Among its findings:

• More than nine in 10 of those surveyed said it is "important" (77 per cent) or "somewhat important" (17 per cent) to teach young people about discrimination, including racism and anti-Semitism. More than nine in 10 also agreed that it is "important" (63 per cent) or "somewhat important" (30 per cent) to teach young people about the Holocaust.

• A slight majority of those polled – 54 per cent – said young people today are not taught enough about the Holocaust, while 26 per cent said they are taught enough about the subject.

• Nearly two-thirds (64 per cent) of respondents said young people are less aware of the Holocaust and its lessons now compared to the past, while 18 per cent said young people are as aware.

• Nearly half (48 per cent) of respondents said young people today are not taught enough in schools about discrimination, including anti-Semitism, while 29 per cent said they are taught the right amount.

• Older respondents (64 per cent of those 55-plus) were more likely than younger ones (45 per cent of 18-34 year-olds) to say that young people are not taught enough about the Holocaust.

• Women (62 per cent) were more likely than men (46 per cent) to say young people today are not taught enough about the Holocaust.

• Respondents in the Prairie provinces (59 per cent) and Quebec (58 per cent) were most likely to say that young people do not receive enough education about the Holocaust.

• Those polled in the Atlantic provinces were most likely (97 per cent) to believe Holocaust education is "important" or "somewhat important," while those in Quebec were least likely (88 per cent).

> *Students are deeply engaged with Holocaust study when it intersects with their lives*
>
> **Dara Solomon**

The survey results "demonstrate the continued value Canadians place on keeping the memory and lessons of the Holocaust alive while pointing to the enduring deficit with respect to Holocaust education that students receive in our school system," said Avi Benlolo, president and CEO of FSWC, in a statement.

Dara Solomon, executive director of the Neuberger Holocaust Education Centre, said the expectation by the previous generation that this generation of students will know details of the Holocaust "might be unrealistic, given that history is taught with a lens to critical thinking rather than rote memorization of facts."

At the Neuberger, "we believe there needs to be a balance between the particulars of the Holocaust and a deeper examination of why and how the Holocaust happened," Solomon told *The CJN*. "We have seen that students are deeply engaged with Holocaust study when it intersects with their lives, focuses on contemporary relevancy and encourages reflection on how they can play a role in contributing to a peaceful, just and civil society."

A poll done for FSWC by Nanos in 2018 showed that nearly eight in 10 respondents said there is a need to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive, but that more than one in 10 said Jews talk too much about the Holocaust and nearly one in six expressed views that could be anti-Semitic.

A 2019 survey found that more than half of all respondents and two-thirds of young people in this country did not know that six million Jews perished in the Holocaust, while a poll released in January revealed that 43 per cent of respondents could correctly identify six million as the number of Jewish Holocaust victims. ■

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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
MARCH 26, 2020

Guest Voice

Love (and work) in the time of corona

Sheri Shefa

I love my kids. I love being a mom. I loved the time I spent with each of my two boys, now 10 and seven, when I was on maternity leave for a year. But when that year was over, I was more than ready to go back to work and send them to school.

I'm a good mom, but I'm a terrible teacher, so when the government announced earlier this month that schools would close for three weeks – and Jewish day schools disclosed that they would be shut for five weeks, until the passing of Passover – in an effort to stop the spread of the coronavirus, I started to get anxious.

On a good day, with all the time in the world, I dread having to help my kids with their homework. It's just not my thing. And then, all of a sudden, with merely a few days to prepare, working parents across the country were told that, in between sitting in on conference calls, replying to email threads and meeting our deadlines, we would have to instruct our kids on every subject so that they can keep up with the curriculum and not fall behind when school resumes after Pesach.

Although we've been given instructions and resources from our teachers, along with access to platforms like Google Classroom, at the end of the day, I'm still expected to keep up with my full-time work responsibilities while juggling a brand-new, full-time teaching gig I didn't sign up for and don't want.

So how am I balancing work and homeschooling? Not well at all. But I'm getting better each day, and that's all I can ask of myself.

Jonah, left, and Arie Oziel keep up with their school work during a five-week school closure.

My boys, like most kids, crave structure and routine. When they don't get enough of it, they turn into cranky jerks. So my strategy was to try to stick to the same routine as if school was still on.

We wake up, get dressed, have breakfast and get to work.

Although I'm not the kind of mom that makes fancy, colour-coded schedules with stickers and rainbows, I do feel empowered by making lists and crossing things off one by one. It's both grounding and satisfying.

> *My boys, like most kids, crave structure and routine.*

We take half an hour in the morning to plan our day. I sort through all the communications from teachers and make a list of all the assignments the kids are expected to complete for the day.

Once they're set up with everything they need, I spend an hour or two focusing on my own work. If the kids have a question they need answered, and I'm on a call, they get a stern look that says wait.

As soon as I'm available, I can help them with whatever questions they may have.

Free play and recess is an important part of any child's day. After a couple hours of school work, I send the kids outside (I'm fortunate enough to have a backyard) to run around and get some fresh air. That's when I prepare lunch.

After recess and lunch, it's back to work for all of us. We go through our list, determine what's left to be done and we basically repeat our morning routine.

On Day 3 of this homeschooling experiment, I can admit it's not perfect, but it's working.

But then, who's expecting perfection? I remind myself that the kids and I are all doing our best to adjust to this new, albeit temporary, reality. There are no right or wrong answers, since we're all just making this up as we go along. All this while managing the anxiety that comes with waking up each morning to more unsettling news.

In spite of everything, I'm grateful for all the quality time I get to spend with my boys throughout these next five weeks. Having the opportunity to cuddle my boys whenever the mood strikes me is a major bonus I don't take for granted.

So while it's second nature for this working Jewish mom to kvetch about how disruptive this social-distancing experiment has been on our lives, it's not all bad. ■

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INTERNATIONAL

Analysis

PM fights virus, and accusations he's undoing democracy

David Horovitz
JERUSALEM

On Saturday, March 21, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gave a remarkable television interview. He was alternately terrifying, aggrieved and paternal. But never – in the midst of both a pandemic and a political fight in which he is accused of seeking to neuter Israeli democracy – was he remotely discomfited.

Speaking soon after the end of Shabbat to Channel 12 news – at a time of peak viewing further enhanced by the fact that the coronavirus semi-lockdown has rendered the entire country a near-captive audience – Netanyahu sketched out a global doomsday scenario in which he, alone, is awake and astute at the helm, steering Israel between icebergs as other nations sink like "Titanics" behind him.

Ten days ago, he compared the coronavirus pandemic to the Spanish flu, which killed an estimated 50 million people in 1918. On Saturday night, he repeated that parallel but warned that it might not prove sufficiently grim. This could turn out to be the worst threat to humanity since the Middle Ages, he suggested; even the scientists, he asserted, were praying to the Creator for inspiration and salvation.

Evidently untroubled by the prospect of U.S. President Donald Trump being briefed on everything he was saying, he predicted that healthcare systems the world over would collapse if the virus is not soon stopped, said countries like Spain, Italy, France and the U.K. that didn't quickly close their borders were now "on the edge of losing control," and then added, in soft and fearsome tones, that the United States too was in big trouble, similarly at risk of being overwhelmed by astronomical numbers of ailing citizens.

When his interviewer, the skilled Dana Weiss, tried to interrupt him and move the conversation on to issues such as Israel's economic meltdown, the too-slow pace of testing, and the lack of protective gear for medical workers, Netanyahu, aggrieved, assured her he would answer her questions, but first wanted to stress that everything he was doing, as he worked night and day and, yes, even on the Shabbat, was aimed at trying "to save the citizens, you, my children."

Israeli children watch as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu holds a press conference on the new government restrictions on March 19. CHEN LEOPOLD/FLASH90 PHOTO

True to his word, he did then address all her questions. He acknowledged that "we're destroying the economy" right now. He acknowledged that the rate of testing needs to improve. He acknowledged that Israel was short of protective gear for its heroic medical professionals. And he promised that he was doing everything in his power to address all these matters – as he doubtless is.

He also posited a strategy for beating the virus and healing the economy, via huge numbers of blood tests to establish which Israelis were healthy, had developed antibodies to beat the virus, and could quickly get back to work.

Next, with Weiss shifting the interview toward Israel's simultaneous political deadlock, Netanyahu set out his "super-generous" terms for a unity partnership with his political rival, former IDF chief Benny Gantz. The way Netanyahu told it, he has proposed a beyond-fair power-sharing arrangement, Gantz is inclining to accept it, but others in Gantz's Blue and White party are preventing it – a narrative that Blue and White denies.

Under Netanyahu's terms, he would stay on as prime minister for the next 18 months, leading an emergency coalition whose central initial focus would be to battle the virus, and then make way for Gantz who would take the helm for another year-and-a-half.

Weiss, aware of how utterly Netanyahu is mistrusted by Gantz, asked him to look into the camera and swear that he would really, truly, hand over power as that deal would require in September 2021. Thoroughly unfazed by this challenge to his honesty, Netanyahu immediately assented, staring into the lens and promising Gantz and the rest of the watching nation that he would indeed step aside on the due date "with no tricks, no messing about."

Netanyahu has long since calculated that if Gantz joins him in government, Blue and White will likely collapse; the party's only unifying purpose, after all, is to oust him. And if Gantz resists, and tries to form a government without Likud and supported by the Joint List of mainly Arab parties, he'll either fail in the act or the coalition will collapse soon after – leaving Netanyahu supremely well-placed for yet fourth elections.

Minutes after Netanyahu had concluded his interview, Blue and White's Moshe Ya'alon appeared on the same channel to accuse Netanyahu of dragging Israel into a dictatorship – with the Knesset temporarily suspended, and no parliamentary oversight of radically intrusive measures to monitor all Israelis' movements and warn them if they have been in unwitting contact with coronavirus carriers.

But Netanyahu had preemptively moved to defuse the accusation that he was destroying democracy, by blaming the intransigent Blue and White for the Knesset deadlock that led Likud Knesset Speaker Yuli Edelstein to shutter the plenum on March 19.

Netanyahu could be right: the pandemic could end up taking tens of millions of lives worldwide. The one to four per cent death toll figures he cited for those infected could turn out to be accurate. Or they could drop drastically as more and more people are tested and found to be infected but well able to shrug off the contagion. Right now, nobody, no matter how expert, can make definitive assessments.

If things prove as chillingly appalling as he suggested, he will be vindicated. If his stewardship proves capable of sparing Israel from the worst of such ravages, he will be rightly adulated.

And here's the thing: if his horrifying assessments prove wide of the mark, he will be able to argue that he was at the forefront of saving not only Israel but also some of the rest of the world from devastation. For it was he who acted so promptly to close off Israel, and also to advise other world leaders wise enough to heed him on the actions they should be taking. (Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz said on March 21 that it was a phone conversation with Netanyahu that "shook" him into instituting stringent measures in Austria to battle the spread of the virus.)

As the world struggles to deal with this terrifying pandemic, and he concurrently battles the virus and allegations that he's subverting democracy, Netanyahu is managing to keep his head far, far above water, Captain Bibi guiding the good ship Israel as other vessels in less experienced hands founder in its wake.

Who remembers that it was Gantz who was charged by the president last Monday with forming Israel's next government? ■

Times of Israel/Timesofisrael.com

THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
MARCH 26, 2020

MKs enter Knesset in small groups for voting

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF
JERUSALEM

Israeli lawmakers will be restricted to entering the Knesset in groups of six at a time for a series of votes as the parliament reopened for business Monday, facing the unprecedented twin challenges of the coronavirus and safeguarding democratic oversight during the crisis.

Knesset director general Albert Saharovich announced the planned measures late Sunday to allow the Knesset to open and vote on forming committees, while taking necessary social distancing precautions. The House was shuttered on March 19 in highly controversial circumstances.

At any given time no more than 10 people will be allowed inside the plenum. Speakers will sign up in advance and will be called to enter when it is their turn to speak. Waiting areas will be designated for those slated to speak. Those outside the plenum will be able to view the goings-on inside on screens.

Voting in the plenum will take place in groups of six MKs at a time, by alphabetical order.

With committees expected to be formed, most will be split between two rooms, with members of the panels communicating with each other via videoconference.

As for the seven MKs currently in quarantine, they will be allowed to vote, though the manner in which they will do so has not yet been finalized.

As of Sunday, seven lawmakers were in quarantine – Interior Minister Aryeh Deri, Regional Affairs Minister Tzachi Hanegbi, Transportation Minister Bezalel Smotrich, Shas MKs Moshe Abutbul and Yitzhak Cohen, and Blue and White MKs Ram Ben-Barak and Alon Shuster – five from the coalition and two from the opposition.

The Blue and White party said Sunday it would not agree to cancel out the votes of coalition members in quarantine by having an equivalent number of its own MKs skip the relevant plenary session, a practice sometimes adopted in other circumstances.

"According to the law, and this is also what Blue and White will follow, every MK is eligible to vote. Solutions need be found to make it happen," a party spokesperson told the *Times of Israel* Sunday.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing bloc of parties was boycotting Monday's proceedings at the Knesset to protest the centre-left bloc's expected wins in votes throughout the day, the *Ynet* news site reported. This would guarantee Blue and White control over the key Knesset Arrangements Committee, which determines which parliamentary committees will be formed at the outset and who will staff them.

Israelis take part in a demonstration "to save Israel's democracy" outside the Knesset in Jerusalem on March 23. OLIVIER FITOUSSI/FLASH90 PHOTO

Netanyahu's Likud party accused the rival Blue and White party of "dictatorial, destructive conduct."

Benny Gantz's party, with a 61-strong majority that includes the predominantly Arab Joint List, is planning to replace Knesset Speaker Yuli Edelstein, form the Arrangements Committee and kick off the 23rd Knesset's activity despite fierce opposition by the current caretaker government.

"Blue and White are trampling democracy using a one-person majority, and with the help of the Joint List, including terror supporter Hiba Yazbak," says Likud, which itself governed several years back with a one-person majority.

Blue and White plans to vote on the formation of the 23rd Knesset's committees, including the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, the Finance Committee and a special committee to oversee the handling of the pandemic.

Blue and White was also planning to try to appoint one of its own MKs as the new Knesset speaker, though current speaker Yuli Edelstein of Likud is at the moment blocking such a vote. The High Court had been deliberating whether to force him to allow it. On Monday, the High Court told Edelstein to hold a vote on choosing his replacement by Wednesday, hinting that otherwise it will rule against him and force him to hold such a vote.

If the vote does go ahead, Netanyahu might not have the backing of some key allies. Yamina and United Torah Judaism have refused to sign the latest Likud document pledging allegiance to Netanyahu, the *Walla* news site reported.

Netanyahu's allies were reportedly being asked to vow that any negotiations for a unity government will be halted if Blue and White appoints a Knesset speaker of its own to replace Edelstein.

The report said some in Yamina were uncomfortable with the wording in the document, including claims that Blue and White was seeking "Iranian-like anti-democratic laws" and "dictatorial laws." Meanwhile UTJ sources said, "We don't like the style of signing [something] every other day."

The jockeying over the new Knesset comes as Israel has been dealing with the massive challenges of the corinavirus following a year without a proper government.

On Sunday morning, Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit and Knesset legal adviser Eyal Yinon said that the parliament cannot be shuttered due to coronavirus fears, or as a coalition negotiating tactic by the Likud party.

Their legal opinions, submitted to the High Court of Justice, dealt a blow to Edelstein's efforts to prevent a vote on his replacement.

The High Court was hearing several petitions against the shuttering of the parliament on Sunday afternoon. The petitions were being heard by a five-judge panel.

Edelstein, who shuttered the Knesset on March 19 citing various justifications – including Blue and White obduracy over the terms for the new committees, his desire for a unity government, and concern over MKs' health – promised to allow votes in the plenum to resume on Monday, with the exception of a vote to replace him with a new speaker.

Likud warned in a statement on Sunday that a vote to replace the speaker would "doom the unity government and condemn us to a fourth election," and called Blue and White's insistence on holding plenum votes "shocking irresponsibility during a global coronavirus pandemic."

In his opinion, Mandelblit said Health Ministry directives prohibiting gatherings of over 10 people could not be applied to the Knesset or its committees, which were not under any government ministry's authority, and so those restrictions could not constitute a reason for preventing the parliament from holding sessions.

He also said it was imperative that the Arrangements Committee be established right away to allow the newly sworn-in Knesset to function.

Edelstein set off a firestorm of criticism on March 19 after he refused to allow the Knesset plenum to convene to vote on establishing the Arrangements Committee and electing a new speaker. Edelstein at first argued the freeze was linked to safety precautions amid the coronavirus outbreak, but later explained it was meant to force Likud and Blue and White to compromise in unity talks.

Critics said it amounted to an illegal shuttering of parliament by Likud in order to improve the party's leverage in the coalition talks. The closure meant intrusive digital tracking of all Israelis, aimed at avoiding the spread of the virus, was introduced without parliamentary oversight. The High Court has ruled that the monitoring will have to be suspended on Tuesday if the relevant Knesset committee is not functioning by then.

According to the Israel Democracy Institute think tank, the freeze appears to be unique among democratic parliaments during the COVID-19 pandemic. While many parliaments have curtailed or changed working arrangements due to the virus, only two others stopped operations altogether, those of Romania and Canada. In both cases – unlike in Israel – the parliament's members voted for the move.

Knesset legal adviser Yinon said in his opinion Sunday that Edelstein did not have the authority to prevent Knesset plenum gatherings, particularly given his standing as an acting speaker held over from the 21st Knesset, two inconclusive elections ago. That status limited his ability to declare sweeping restrictions on the Knesset's work, including the decision not to allow plenum votes that could replace him with a new speaker.

"A situation in which an unelected Knesset speaker serves only by virtue of the principle of continuity is likely to lead to a result in which the current majority in the Knesset finds it difficult to advance moves that it wants," Yinon wrote. ■

Times of Israel / Timeofisrael.com

Israel considering tighter lockdown rules

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF
JERUSALEM

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was to consider the possibility of tightening the country's lockdown amid the coronavirus pandemic, as the number of infected in Israel shot up to 1,238.

The Health Ministry on Monday morning announced the new tally, a rise of 135 over Sunday evening. It said 24 people were in serious condition as a result of the virus, and 34 were moderately ill. The ministry said it had administered over 5,000 tests in the past 24 hours. Some 464 of the ill were at home and 120 were being treated in hotels that had been converted to house COVID-19 patients, the ministry said.

Some 37 people have recovered from the disease in Israel, while one person, 88-year-old Aryeh Even, has died.

Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan on Monday doubled down on his call for a full lockdown of the country and called for greater enforcement.

"My fear is of what will happen in a week or two," Erdan, whose office oversees the police, told the Kan public broadcaster. "A week ago I expressed my opinion that we must have a full lockdown for two weeks, with much wider enforcement. The number of options for leaving home (under such a scenario) would be much more limited."

Israeli police in the haredi neighbourhood of Mea Shearim on March 22 enforce new government regulations in an effort to contain the spread of the coronavirus. YONATAN SINDEL/FLASH90 PHOTO

Ministers late Saturday night updated the emergency regulations, which came into effect on Sunday at 8 a.m. for the next seven days, aimed at keeping Israelis at home and to be enforced by police.

According to the new rules, which the government has vowed to enforce, Israelis must remain at home, with exceptions made for buying essential food and medical supplies or seeking medical treatment.

Other exceptions include attending demonstrations, aiding an elderly or ill person, donating blood, attending court hearings, seeking aid from welfare services, going to the Knesset, and attending religious services, including weddings and funerals (which must have no more than 10 people present) or visiting a ritual bath (mikveh).

Israelis were permitted to exercise outdoors, with no more than two people together, and to venture out for short walks near their homes. The ban also limited the number of people who could drive in a car to two, unless they were members of the same household (this does not apply to "essential" errands, carpools of essential workers to and from work, and delivery services).

It wasn't immediately clear what further steps Netanyahu was weighing, but health officials have criticized Israelis for continuing to gather in public spaces despite the order.

The head of the coronavirus treatment team at the Health Ministry said Sunday that if people abide by the new directives and stay home, Israel will start to see results in approximately 10 days.

"Hopefully, the self-isolation will flatten the curve significantly," Dr. Boaz Lev told the Kan public broadcaster, referring to efforts to try to prevent a surge in the number of people requiring hospitalization at the same time. ■

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Jewish Life

A HUMANISTIC, YET TRADITIONAL, HAGGADAH

BARBARA SILVERSTEIN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Paul and Brenda Hoffert were not happy with the haggadah they had been using because it did not reflect their humanist philosophy and it was not accessible to the large and varied group they had been hosting at family seders for decades.

About 2½ years ago the couple set out to create a new family haggadah that would be humanistic, but still retain the traditional Hebrew songs and prayers. They even commissioned original art work to illustrate their new haggadah.

Their longtime friend, Esther Gelcer, an artist and retired psychologist, created 19 large paintings, which along with the Hoffert haggadah were to have been on display at Congregation Habonim of Toronto.

Having a haggadah that would be inclusive for the whole family was the motivation to create something new, Brenda Hoffert explained in a telephone interview from the couple's winter home in Florida.

"The story of Passover still has strong meaning for us today."

Paul Hoffert, a founding member of the rock band Lighthouse and a jazz musician, said he and his wife also wanted a more personalized haggadah. "We thought it would be nice to have something we had written ourselves.

"That was the motivation – to create something just for the family."

However, he said he discovered that this haggadah project entailed a significant amount of research. "We checked the websites for different rabbinical interpretations of other haggadahs. We downloaded 15 different haggadahs, many with modern innovations."

When he compared them, each version was different. "We noticed that there is no official order. People do things in different orders."

The Hofferts also wanted a more feminist haggadah and so they incorporated the feminist symbol of the orange, Brenda Hoffert said, pointing out that an orange emphasizes the importance of women at the seder.

She said it's a feminist addition which comes from the statement: "There is as much place for a woman at the seder as an orange on the seder plate."

The new haggadah also has an operatic libretto composed by the Hofferts (Brenda is a lyricist).

They also offer the English transliteration of many of the Hebrew songs and prayers to maximize the participation of everyone in the family, Paul Hoffert said. "We have a diverse crowd."

In previous years their seders have been large. Between 25 and 35 people have attended their seders, which have also been held at their winter home in Florida as many members of their family are U.S. residents.

Brenda Hoffert said that Gelcer – she lives in Israel part of the year – who is the illustrator of the haggadah, has translated it into Hebrew and made it available in Israel.

The Hofferts said they were thrilled with the art work. Gelcer's interpretation of the haggadah is more psychological, Brenda Hoffert said.

In an email Gelcer wrote: "Exodus is analogous to the transformational processes that people go through in psychotherapy. The struggle from slavery to freedom represents the process of psychotherapy and personal transformation.

"We are all slaves under the yoke of life's problems but, once we free ourselves from these, we become masters of our own world. The process, like forty years in the desert, is long and arduous, but once you go through 'the parting of the sea' you're at a point of no return; you are committed." ■

Esther Gelcer's work for the Hoffert haggadah. Top is Haggadah Dancers, and above is Parting of the Red Sea.

Addressing climate change through music

RUTH SCHWEITZER
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Climate change is rarely addressed in mainstream music, but independent artists like Elizabeth Leslie are rising to the challenge and tackling the subject.

Awareness of climate change struck Leslie in 2016, while she hiked in the Scottish Highlands on a month-long visit to Scotland, expecting to find lush green hills. "It was 25 degrees (Celsius) in April and I was surrounded by yellowing grass. It was really sad because the land is dying," she said.

Leslie, a dark-wave synth-pop artist, responded to the desolate Highlands by writing "To the Next," an eerie impressionistic song about climate change. It was recently released on her debut EP, *Brave Animal*.

"Climate change is a byproduct of capitalism," she said. "All of us are living in this time of materialism and spirituality has gone by the wayside. Our environment is crumbling around us and we just keep going through the motions."

In "To the Next," men are "fighting against this world," suggesting they are responsible for the degradation of our environment. The narrator addresses a "little girl" several times in the song, giving her some hope, assuring her "we're fighting for the next."

She's a metaphorical little girl, someone like Greta Thunberg, Leslie said. "All these younger kids, we're destroying the environment at such an accelerated rate, that they have nothing to look forward to. I tried to give them some kind of hope. They need someone who's older to at least fight by their side. Right now, all of our world leaders are not doing this."

Brave Animal, a three-track EP produced by Matt DeMatteo, is a snapshot of different stages of Leslie's life over the span of eight years, as a non-binary queer person in a heteronormative society.

"The truth is the world is vastly heteronormative and that's great if you're heterosexual and you don't have to deal with discrimination based on your sexual orientation," she said.

"When you're a gay person and you also look sort of gender ambiguous, you walk through the world with a lot of shame and you go through it on a daily basis often, just being shamed for loving who you love."

Along with "To the Next" the EP includes "You Don't Know Me," a song about judgments people make on the basis of instant impressions. "We have a tendency to put people in boxes. I definitely experience that quite often," Leslie said. "They say, 'You're an angry lesbian. I don't want to talk to you. You hate men.'"

Elizabeth Leslie TANJA TIZIANA BURDI PHOTO

She wrote the oldest song on the EP, the hypnotic "Slave Song," 10 years ago, while she was breaking up with an ultra-Orthodox Jewish woman, a member of a band Leslie played with. "I was very much in love with her and so I was going through that kind of aftermath," Leslie said. "(In the song) I'm saying I can deal with the hatred of the world, but what you did to me is so much more hurtful. It's a mixture of a lot of things I was going through at the time."

Originally from Nova Scotia, Leslie is a multi-instrumentalist who spent most of her 20s performing in local indie bands in Montreal. Now based in Toronto, she was exposed to Jewish culture in Montreal through the Jewish woman she was dating and eventually broke up with. Leslie said there was something about Jewish culture that felt familiar to her. "It was only after our relationship ended that I discovered my family was originally Jewish, centuries ago," she said. Leslie converted to Judaism in 2013, when she was 28.

"I feel very inspired by lots of aspects of Judaism," she said. "That definitely carries into my music and carries into the messages I try to put into it, in trying to leave the world a better place than what it is now."

The single "To the Next" is on YouTube and Leslie's EP is on Spotify. ■

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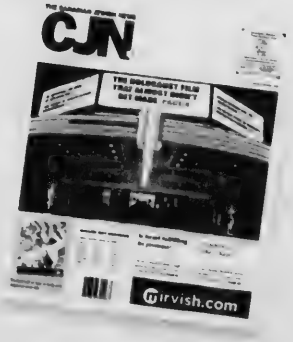

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Survivor teaches students in Shoah documentary

MYRON LOVE
PRAIRIES CORRESPONDENT, WINNIPEG

On Wednesday, March 11, the Berney Theatre at the Asper Jewish Community Campus was packed for the premiere of *Tikkun Olam: Isaac's Legacy*, Winnipeg filmmaker Yolanda Papini-Pollock's third documentary dealing with mass murder and genocide.

Papini-Pollock's first such documentary — in partnership with Erol Meryl, premiered in 2016. *Never Again: A Broken Promise* profiles Holocaust survivor Edith Kimelman as well as Steve Maman (the Montreal businessman who rescued numerous Yazidis), a Winnipegger of Yazidi origin, a survivor of the Rwanda genocide and a survivor of the residential school system.

Earlier this year, she introduced a new documentary, *Painful Truth*, on the Chinese government's persecution of the Falun Gong practitioners.

Tikkun Olam was filmed over two years and focuses on the interaction of 94-year-old Holocaust survivor and educator Isaac Gotfried and a class of Grade 12 students at J. H. Bruns Collegiate, a secondary school in southern Winnipeg. The students are taking a Global Issues class taught by Tom Beyak.

The documentary, which was co-produced by Erol Meryl, intersperses historical footage with scenes of Gotfried talking to the students, interviews with some of the students about their reactions and a follow-up visit to the school by Gotfried where the some of the students talk about some of the actions they were inspired to take to better their society.

Yoanda Papini-Pollock , left, with Holocaust survivor and educator Isaac Gotfried and B'nai Brith Winnipeg office manager Adriana Glikman.

Gotfried was born in western Poland into a family of six. Only he and his older brother survived. He came to Winnipeg in 1947 as part of a group of war orphans where he was able to rebuild his life, marry and raise four daughters. He has been speaking to young people about his experiences in the Holocaust for more than 25 years. Three years ago, he self-published his autobiography, *Lucky to Survive*. He is donating all proceeds from the sale of the book to the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

The premiere evening began with sombre music. Gray Academy student Mark Pavily played "My Yiddishe Mama" on violin, accompanied on piano by Prof. Oleg Pachanovsky. Jeremy Buzash, a violinist with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, then played "Kaddish" and the theme music from *Schindler's List*.

The documentary itself has a running time of about 30 minutes. Following the documentary, Gotfried was joined on stage to answer questions by J. H. Bruns teacher, Tom Beyak, and student, Kaitlyn Madeiros, who served in the documentary as narrator.

"Listening to Isaac helped us realize how good our lives are here," responded Madeiros to one question. "He also made us aware of the need to be respectful to others."

She added that she is training to be a nurse and intends to apply what she learned from Gotfried to helping others in her chosen profession.

Beyak noted that the students "couldn't help but be transformed" by hearing about Gotfried's experiences. He recalled that when he was going to school students weren't taught more recent history.

Gotfried pointed out that while Canada "is one of the best countries in the world," Canada was also complicit in the Holocaust in refusing to let in Jews looking for a safe haven.

"It can happen here, too," he added referencing the treatment of Canada's Aboriginal Peoples.

"Our hope in making *Tikkun Olam* is that Isaac's story will serve as an inspiration for students and help to increase tolerance and respect for others and lead to a more just society," Papini-Pollock said. ■

The program was a joint production of Winnipeg Friends of Israel, (a grassroots Israel advocacy group that Papini-Pollock founded in 2015), the Rady JCC and B'nai Brith Canada. The documentary also received funding from the Jewish Foundation of Manitoba.

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Jewish arts institutions battered amid virus chaos

MICHAEL FRAIMAN
mfraiman@thecjn.ca

Joe Matheson and Louise Pitre *The Times The Are a Changin'.* ANDREE LANTHIER PHOTO

On the morning of March 12, Lisa Rubin, the artistic and executive director of the Segal Centre in Montreal, made a difficult decision: the theatre would temporarily shut down immediately because of COVID-19. Three hours later, Quebec Premier François Legault announced a ban on any gatherings of more than 250 people, affirming Rubin's choice.

"I knew from the meetings I was having, from the ad hoc committees, the experts I was talking to that it was imminent," she says. Shutting down the season meant cancelling the remaining dates for *The Times They Are A Changin'* and the entire run of *Oslo*, a play about the Israeli peace accords, which was slated to run from April to May. For that show, everything was already done: sets were built, actors had memorized their lines, ads had been published and the lighting was designed.

"That was a big blow," Rubin says. "For theatres to have to close their doors right now, and to have to tell these artists and craftspeople and ushers and box office attendants and carpenters and painters that there's no show for you to work on the next few months, it's devastating. It's absolutely devastating."

Rubin is not alone. While health and economic news about rising death tolls and plunging stocks dominate headlines during the coronavirus pandemic, the tragedy of what's befallen arts institutions has gotten somewhat buried. Theatres, festivals, producers and artists are part of a gig-based industry that invariably relies on a combination of government grants and private fundraising to supplement ticket sales.

For the Segal Centre, it's not just about their main season, either. The centre hosts guest theatre companies with one annual show, as well as fundraisers and sold-out classes, all of which had to be cancelled as well.

"Coming to terms with the uncertainty and the repercussions this could have on our businesses and our organizations, and then, of course, for the artists … it's quite scary," Rubin says.

In Toronto, the co-artistic directors of the Harold Green Jewish Theatre Company, David Eisner and Avery Saltzman, had to make a similar call, postponing the Canadian première of *The Great Divide*, which Saltzman also directed. They plan to run it next year instead. The fate of their other planned show for this season, *Vitaly: An Evening of Wonders*, is still in flux.

"We're in the same boat as every not-for-profit," Saltzman says. "It's a sad time in the arts community."

Saltzman notes that Canada's biggest theatre companies, such as Shaw and Stratford, have been suffering the same problems, postponing openings and cancelling programs. Their business typically kick-starts in April, coinciding with the start of festival season, a traditionally hectic few months from April to September when hundreds of arts festivals vie for the precious few warm weekends available in Canada.

Among those festivals is the Toronto Jewish Film Festival (TJFF), slated to kick off in May.

Debbie Werner, the festival's executive director, says they are "actively working on alternative ways and means of delivering our program to our audience." Specifically, they're considering rescheduling certain screenings and live guests for the fall, while conducting the rest of their program digitally – selling tickets to one-time-only screenings that audience members can log into and view from their home computers.

Jérémie Abessira, TJFF's director of operations, says he believes this curveball may create an opportunity to change the way people think about film festivals.

"It might affect not only the next few weeks, but it might affect years of thinking about how we were watching films, how we were showing films and what is a film festival," he says.

On the upside, Abessira noticed the website traffic for Jflix, TJFF's free streaming website, where they host many past festival films, has doubled its normal volume since March 11 – around the same time the pandemic started dominating headlines.

Werner also believes this will redefine festivals after the pandemic passes. "It also helps us appreciate even more those opportunities when we actually can come together as a community," she says.

Rubin, from the Segal Centre, agrees.

"When this is over, the need to gather and to be together will be stronger than ever," she says. "We're going to keep going. The curtain will rise again."

It was also announced on March 19, that Jewish Music Week in Toronto, scheduled for May, has been cancelled. ■

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Musicians struggle to cope with loss of income

RUTH SCHWEITZER
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

The Toronto music community has been hit hard by the coronavirus.

The city's clubs and bars are closed for an indefinite period of time and concerts and music festivals have been cancelled, putting the livelihood of many musicians in jeopardy.

Jewish Music Week in Toronto 2020 has been cancelled. And this summer's Ashkenaz Festival may be quite different from previous editions.

Musicians make a living through live performances, as fewer people are buying CDs or even downloading music, and royalties from music streaming services tend to be low for most artists.

Latin jazz singer Amanda Martinez and her husband, bassist Drew Birsten, a couple whose income comes solely from recording and performing, are among the hardest hit by the virus. Martinez's U.S. tour, to promote her album, *Libre*, was cancelled, as was Birsten's U.S. tour with the Sultans of String.

Jazz singer and songwriter Marc Jordan was nominated for a 2020 Juno for his 2019 album *Both Sides*. The virus was responsible for the cancellation of the Juno Awards ceremony and winners have yet to be announced. Jordan said all of his gigs, including one in Los Angeles and three in the Nashville area, have been cancelled.

Jordan has been working in his home studio. Pianist Michael Kaeshammer was supposed to join him there for a session, but in the end the two of them thought the better of it. "You don't want to transmit something that's going to kill somebody. Some of us are carrying the virus and there's no way around it. The socially conscious thing to do is to self-isolate," Jordan said.

Amanda Martinez

Marc Jordan

Jazz-classical fusion artist Ron Davis was nominated for a Juno for his instrumental album *SymphRONica UpfRONt*, but his dream of walking up the red carpet with his wife, singer Daniela Nardi, never became a reality. Some of Davis' gigs have been cancelled, but his income is secure because he practises law. He is worried about his music director, guitarist Kevin Barrett, whose only source of income is music.

Eric Stein, who plays mandolin with the klezmer fusion band Beyond The Pale, said the band got back to Toronto from their recent U.S. tour just before the virus hit here. He said he wouldn't be surprised if the virus circulates here for a year in some form or another. "Organizations like Ashkenaz are going to have to re-evaluate what we do," he said. "I'm seeing a lot of stuff on social media, people looking at streaming concerts and doing concerts from empty spaces and moving more to a virtual space."

Drummer Lorie Wolf was supposed to perform at Jewish Music Week, which has been cancelled, and she is scheduled to play at this year's TD Toronto Jazz Festival, but the event is now up in the air, she said. Her monthly klezmer jams, which she co-hosts at Drom Taberna, a restaurant on Queen Street West, have been cancelled. She also leads a wedding band called the Horah Machine. With the virus circulating, she isn't expecting anyone to book the band.

Since last May, trumpeter David Buchbinder has travelled back and forth between Toronto and New Orleans to study jazz. He said he was thinking about riding out the virus in New Orleans, with the idea that in two weeks or a month it would be gone. "I realized there was too much unknown going on," he said, and he drove back to Canada. "I was very happy to cross the border," he added, speaking from an Airbnb in Toronto, where he's self-isolating.

Toronto-based composer and singer Lenka Lichtenberg's tour of the Czech Republic was cancelled. Her multimedia show, *The Thieves of Dreams*, based on poems her grandmother wrote when she was a prisoner in the Theresienstadt concentration camp, was slated for a late April performance, but it's been postponed until the fall.

Faced with cancellations, jazz singer Ori Dagan is planning to set up a Patreon page online, where he can post music videos for patrons around the world who subscribe to his channel. Dagan also programs live music at the 120 Diner, a club in downtown Toronto that's now closed, except for food delivery and takeout. He said the diner was struggling before the virus hit and it and other similar venues are in a critical situation.

Brian Gladstone's monthly open mic at the Free Times Cafe, Dr. B's Acoustic Medicine Show, was cancelled in March, as were his upcoming gigs at the Tranzac Club, the 120 Diner and the Black Swan. The guitarist, singer and songwriter said the artists will be around after the virus passes, but the currently shuttered venues may not. "The venues may not be able to survive for a few months," he said. When the city allows the clubs to reopen, he's planning to organize fundraisers for them. ■

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Terror incident exposed deeper nature of anti-Semitism

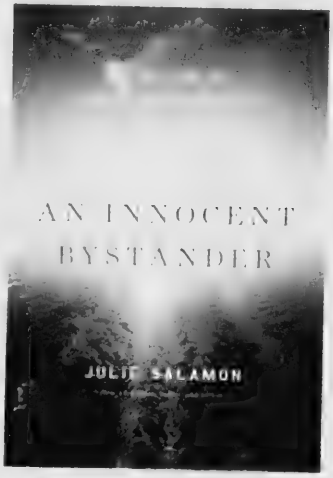
ARI BLAFF
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Terrorism disproportionately influences politics. As Matti Friedman wrote in the *New York Times* on the eve of Israel's most recent election, the Second Intifada irrevocably changed the trajectory of Israeli politics. "No single episode has shaped Israel's population and politics like the wave of suicide bombings perpetrated by Palestinians in the first years of the 21st century," Friedman argued. Similarly, Steven Brill demonstrated in *The Atlantic* how 9/11 forever changed the American political imagination, shaping national debates on security, borders and policing. Amplified by media narratives, around-the-clock news and, as George Will once remarked, "the pornography of grief," terrorism captivates.

Julie Salamon's latest book, *An Innocent Bystander*, is a refreshing reminder of terrorism's enduring legacy on societies far beyond the act itself. The book follows the story of Leon Klinghoffer, a disabled American Jewish tourist, murdered by Palestinian Liberation Front (PLF) terrorists aboard the Achille Lauro, an Italian cruise ship, in 1985. Filled with evocative themes from terrorism on the high seas to criminal trials and international politicking, *An Innocent Bystander* transcends the murder itself, aiming to contextualize the broader implications set in motion by Klinghoffer's murder. Foreshadowing the "War on Terror" with its attendant modern implications, Salamon interweaves a cascading narrative, linking the Achille Lauro, American media, terrorism trials and Klinghoffer's ascension into popular consciousness.

Underlying Salamon's narrative is the ordinariness the Klinghoffer family exuded. "The Klinghoffers were an American family, innocent bystanders to someone else's war," Salamon writes. Following the tragedy, they became the quintessential "poster children" of terrorism for America. Remarkably, Salamon writes, against the backdrop of rising urban violence, the Klinghoffer saga's resemblance to a spy novel eclipsed all other news coverage.

An Innocent Bystander is equally a compelling work of social memory and terrorism's broader imprint upon society. Tucked within the latter half of the novel, Salamon examines terrorism's afterlife. Reminiscent of recent 9/11-inspired plays, such as *Come From Away*, in later years, Klinghoffer's murder inspired the San Francisco Opera to commission a work, *The Death of Klinghoffer*, based on the hijacking. Moreover, two made-for-television movies sought to resurrect the drama, all while Philip Roth incorporated a nod to Klinghoffer in his book *Operation Shylock*.



An Innocent Bystander
by Julie Salamon

Little Brown and Company

No doubt the ingredients for such drama were there. However, for all inherent evocative themes throughout the book, its structure and organization, at times, fails to capture the tense atmosphere of the hijacking. Rather than reconstructing an entire chapter exclusively on the attack, Salamon diverts readers' attention by prematurely jumping to regional politics, the PLO's ejection from Lebanon and Ronald Reagan's ascent as U.S. president. The narrative's disjointed nature, culminating in Klinghoffer's murder in Chapter 4, is ultimately anti-climactic. Spliced within this span are also redundant biographical sketchings from tangential characters. For example, seven pages in the second chapter are dedicated to Reem al-Nimer, the PLF commander's second wife.

Salamon's narrative structure is once more convoluted surrounding the eventual capture of the hijackers. Although Salamon succeeds in drawing readers into the high-paced American interception of the perpetrators aboard an EgyptAir Boeing 737, the chapter uncharacteristically ends by springboarding readers into former U.S. senator James Abourezk's founding of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), and the Jewish Defence League's alleged role in the murder of ADC employee Alex Odeh. Only after these issues are addressed does Salamon return to the unfolding crisis between American and Italian forces at the Sigonella air force base.

Notwithstanding certain narrative shortcomings, Salamon's retelling of Klinghoffer's murder evokes a deeper, almost communal sense of horror and hopelessness Jews have increasingly become attuned to. In part, this stems from Salamon's initial motivations to write the book. As she confesses in the book's acknowledgements, it was originally entitled *Klinghoffer's Daughters*, intended to narrowly detail an American perspective in a "suspenseful, heart-wrenching and intellectually engaging" fashion.

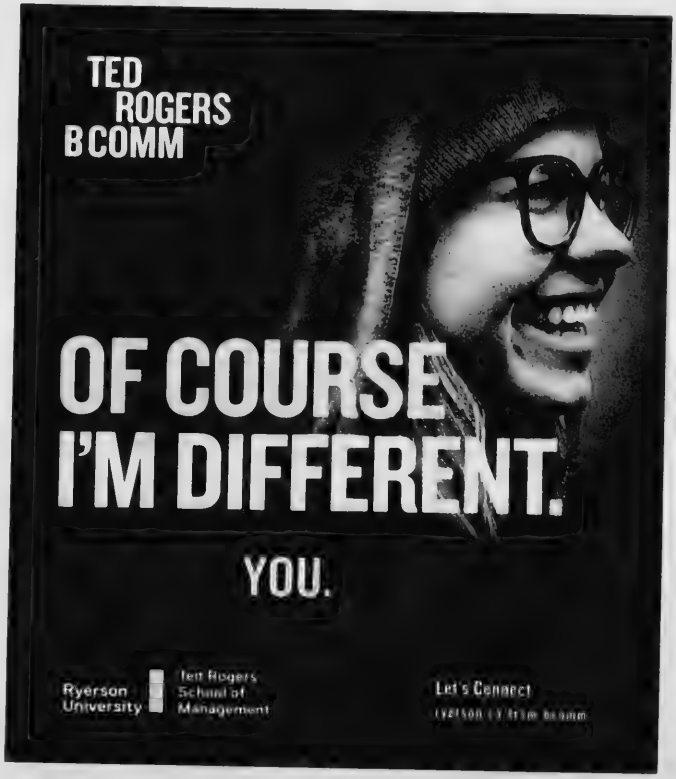
Indeed, in expanding the book's scope, Salamon succeeded in magnifying a deeper historical truth about the nature of anti-Semitism. As Salamon writes, the extent of the Klinghoffers' version of "sentimental" Zionism amounted to viewing Israel merely as "a place to plant a tree in honour of someone who had died." The superficiality of identity amongst the Achille Lauro's Jewish passengers, nonetheless, did not remove them from being prime targets of violence. They discarded any potentially damning object liable to expose their religion. Chai necklaces as well as B'nai Brith cards sank to the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea in a desperate attempt to collectively cleanse their owners' Jewish identities. This, perhaps, is the most compelling, though unpondered, aspect of *An Innocent Bystander*.

Although Salamon likely completed the book prior to the most savage illustrations of violent anti-Semitism in American history in Pittsburgh and Poway, Calif., it is impossible for contemporary readers to ignore seeing parallels. Perhaps, most presciently, *An Innocent Bystander* is a reminder that whether Jews live in Israel or the Diaspora, whether they are ardent Zionists or anti-Zionists, their Judaism remain a common denominator for bigotry.

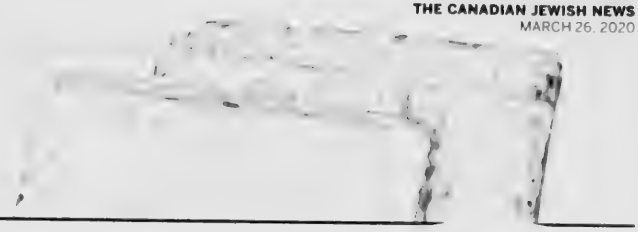
"The Jewish passengers felt an ingrained response, the fear of anti-Semitism lurking," Salamon writes shortly after describing the hijacking. That sense is once more crawling up the backs of American Jews today.

However, not all is lost.

As Poway's Rabbi Yisroel Goldstein maintained in the *New York Times* following the attack on his congregation, it served as "a reminder that my ancestors gave their lives so that I can live in freedom in America; and a reminder, most of all, to never, ever, not ever be afraid to be Jewish." ■



PASSOVER FOOD



Family seder recipes

BARBARA SILVERSTEIN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Carolyn Tanner-Cohen, the woman behind the Delicious Dish Cooking School, will be making the gefilte fish for her family seder this year.

Her recipe was handed down from her Romanian maternal great-grandmother to her grandmother, Eva Levin. The actual recipe is a closely guarded family secret that cannot be shared.

However, Tanner-Cohen is sharing her recipe for carrot and beet slaw with horseradish vinaigrette, a dish, she says, is the perfect accompaniment for gefilte fish.

Tanner-Cohen has also offered her recipe for beet gravlax and eggplant stack, which she recommends as a first course substitute for gefilte fish.

Tanner-Cohen said that while she learned to make the fish from her maternal grandmother, her paternal grandmother, Claire Tanner, also made gefilte fish, but her recipe originated in Poland.

Tanner-Cohen said when her father, Marvin Tanner, was a young boy his mother (Claire), would purchase a live fish and let it swim in the bathtub.

With the passage of time she was able to buy filleted fish, which she used to grind, until her fish monger began selling ground fish, Tanner-Cohen recounted.

"I used to watch her make her gefilte fish, but I never got her recipe. She died when I was 16."

When Tanner-Cohen's daughters - Jacqueline, 22 and Olivia, 20 - were younger, they looked on while their mother prepared the Levin gefilte fish recipe. "I wanted my daughters to be part of the day and watch me so I could pass the recipe on to the next generation."

She said there has always been "a friendly competition among Levin's children and grandchildren" as to who makes the best gefilte fish.

"My Aunt Susan said, 'You can't teach this recipe,' and so it must remain a family secret." ■

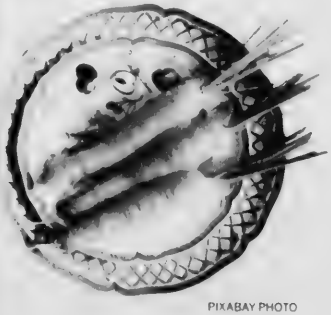
To see more of Tanner Cohen's recipes visit her Web Site, Deliciousdish.ca or follow her on Instagram @deliciousdishcooking.

Carrot and beet slaw with horseradish vinaigrette

- 375 ml (1¾ cup) raw unsalted shelled pistachios
- 15 ml (1 tbsp) olive oil
- Pinch of kosher salt
- 6 medium size carrots, peeled
- 4 beets (mix red and yellow), peeled
- A small piece of fresh horseradish, peeled
- 125 ml (½ cup) chopped parsley or cilantro
- 50 ml (¼ cup) mint, chopped
- 125 ml (½ cup) golden raisins

Dressing

- 15 ml (1 tbsp) prepared white horseradish
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 30 ml (2 tbsp)finely chopped shallots
- 15 ml (1 tbsp) honey
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) white wine vinegar
- 60 ml (4 tbsp) extra virgin olive oil
- Cracked black pepper
- Coarse sea salt for sprinkling on the salad



PIXABAY PHOTO

CAROLYN COHEN PHOTO

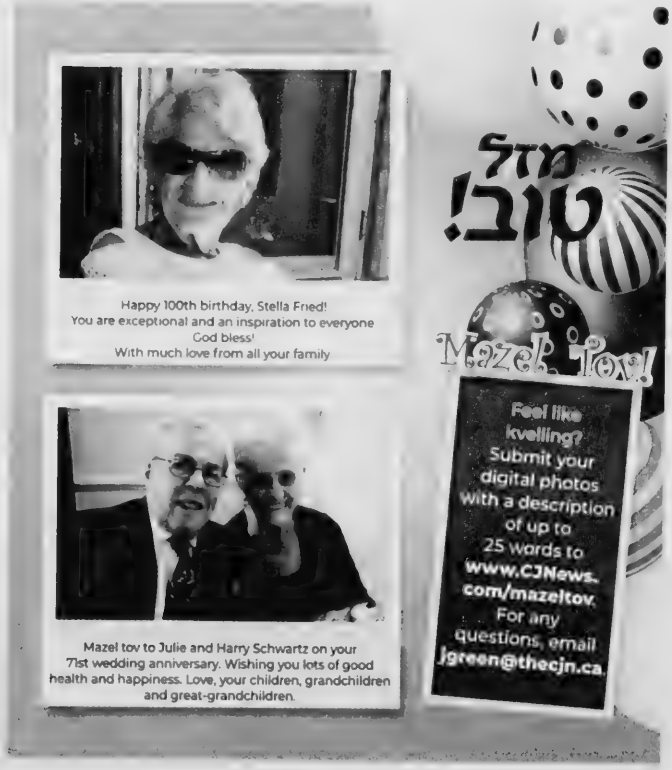
Preheat the oven to 150 C (290 F). In a bowl, toss the pistachios with the olive oil and salt. Arrange the pistachios on a parchment lined cookie sheet and roast for 25 minutes, remove and let cool. Set aside.

Julienne the beets, carrots and fresh horseradish. A mandolin works well for this step.

To prepare the dressing: Mix together the horseradish, garlic, shallots, honey, vinegar, olive oil, pepper and salt.

Roughly chop most of the pistachios, leaving a few whole.

About 20 minutes before serving, toss the julienne vegetables with the raisins, herbs, pistachios and dressing, arrange in a shallow bowl. Sprinkle with coarse sea salt and pepper. Makes 10 servings.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WIKIMEDIA COMMONS PHOTO

Gefilte fish

- 2 onions, sliced
- 2 carrots, sliced
- 1 l (1 quart) water
- 10 ml (2 tsp) sugar
- 1¾ kg (2 lbs) minced fish
- 4 eggs
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) matzah meal
- 375 ml (1¾ cup) cold water
- 2 grated carrots
- 2 grated onions
- 5 ml (1 tsp) sugar
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) salt
- pepper to taste

Place the sliced onions, sliced carrots, water and sugar in a large pot and bring to a boil.

In a stand mixer combine the fish, eggs, matzah meal, cold water, grated carrots, grated onions, sugar, salt and pepper.

Moisten hands and shape the fish into plum-sized balls. Drop the fish balls into the boiling water with carrots and onions. Partially cover the pot and simmer for 2 hours. Serve hot or cold. Makes 12 servings.

Beet gravlax

- 1 large piece of salmon, skin on
- 175 ml (¾ cup) sugar
- 80 ml (1/3 cup) kosher salt
- Handful of peppercorns
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) gin
- 1 bunch of dill, washed
- 2 raw beets, washed, roughly chopped

Place the beets and the dill in the bowl of the food processor and pulse until chopped, add the sugar, salt, peppercorns and gin, pulse to mix.

Lay two very long pieces of plastic wrap side by side on the counter (more than double the length of the salmon). Then lay a piece of parchment paper on top of the plastic wrap (not as big as the plastic wrap but double the size of the salmon).

Place the salmon on the piece of parchment.

Spread the beet mixture over the salmon and pat it down.

Tightly wrap the parchment over the salmon and then the plastic wrap and place in a glass dish. Place a heavy weight on top of the fish and place in the fridge for 72 hours.

After 3 days, remove the weight and the wrap. Wash the fish clean.

Slice the fish on a diagonal into very thin wide slices.

PIXABAY PHOTO

CONTINUED ON PAGE 36

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Passover taco Tuesday

RANDY FINGRUT
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Wouldn't it be great if every Tuesday was taco Tuesday, even during Passover?

Well I'm here to tell you that Passover taco Tuesday is now a 'thing!'

The simplicity of tacos makes them a fun dish that anybody can prepare. Not only are they affordable, but they also allow for individuals likes and dislikes and can easily serve a crowd. But are tacos considered to be junk food or healthy food?

The types of ingredients used to prepare the tacos and how those ingredients are cooked, can make all the difference health wise. The first step to making tacos a healthy meal is choosing ingredients such as lean proteins, like ground chicken with all the fat drained away after cooking. Next serve lots of vegetables, cut up and presented fresh, grilled, or sautéed with limited vegetable oil Last of all, use delicious, but healthier toppings for the tacos, such as homemade guacamole, and tangy salsa and you will have a winner Tuesday Passover dinner! ■

Tex/Mex Salad

- ❏ 1 head of lettuce, or equivalent amount of mixed lettuces
- ❏ 1 red pepper, julienned
- ❏ 1 cucumber, julienned
- ❏ 250 ml (1 cup) grape tomatoes
- ❏ 1 avocado, sliced

Dressing

- ❏ 2 ml (½ tsp) minced dehydrated garlic
- ❏ 2 ml (½ tsp) chili powder
- ❏ 5 ml (1 tsp) cumin
- ❏ 2 ml (½ tsp) salt
- ❏ 1 ml (¼ tsp) black pepper
- ❏ 250 ml (1 cup) vinegar
- ❏ Juice of one lime
- ❏ 250 ml (1 cup) vegetable oil

To prepare the dressing: whisk well and toss into salad.

Serves 4 to 6.

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Passover Tacos

Taco Shells

- ½ box of matzah
- Vegetable oil
- ground cumin
- Salt

Chicken filling

- 15 ml (1 tbsp) vegetable oil
- 680 grams (1-½ pounds) ground chicken
- 250 ml (1 cup) salsa
- 2 ml (½ tsp) minced dehydrated garlic
- 2 ml (½ tsp) salt
- 1 ml (¼ tsp) black pepper
- 2 ml (½ tsp) chili powder
- 5 ml (1 tsp) cumin
- 1 zest of one lime
- Juice of one lime
- Lime for garnish

To prepare the taco shells: Preheat the oven to 175 C (350 F). Cover two large baking sheets with parchment paper. Break matzah into quarters. Lay matzah on parchment paper and brush with vegetable oil, then sprinkle with cumin, then sprinkle with salt. Bake for 5 minutes.

To make the chicken filling: In a large frying pan, heat vegetable oil and add ground chicken. Cook ground chicken, moving it around, chopping it into small pieces and turning it over, until all the fat becomes liquid and the meat is starting to brown. Drain fat from ground chicken and add in the next 8 ingredients. Bring to a boil and then reduce heat and simmer for 5 minutes.

Remove to serving bowl and drizzle with juice of remaining lime.

Serves 4 to 6.

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Parashah

Vayikra | Leviticus 1:1-5:26

Yael Shapiro discovers the fundamental link between korbanot and prayers
Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl considers how to preserve purity of person and place
Rabbi Catharine Clark says our current situation offers a chance to draw closer to God

Yael Shapiro

This week's parashah, Vayikra, is unique, as it describes *korbanot* (sacrifices/offerings) and the Jewish nation's mission, rather than a historical event. Although we no longer have the Beit ha-Mikdash (Temple), and therefore do not perform *korbanot* anymore, the various offerings are still relevant to our everyday lives – in particular, the daily offering.

This daily *korban* represents the importance of growing closer to God on a daily basis rather than only on holidays, during times of gratitude or after sinning. Since we no longer bring *korbanot* three times a day, we pray three times a day instead.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch notes the importance of *korbanot* – and hence their replacement, prayers – from a portion of the second verse of the parashah: "when a person among you brings an offering to God." Rabbi Hirsch explains that the usual translation of the word *korban*, as "sacrifice" or "offering," does not represent the word's full meaning. Rather, the word is derived from the Hebrew word *karov*, meaning close/come near.

The purpose of both these actions, *korbanot* and praying, is to bring us closer to God, which is why they are connected.

As well, just as *korbanot* are based on meaning rather than money (animals, birds or grains could be used depending on what the giver was able to afford), praying is also solely based on meaning and intention.

This shows that as long as you have the intention of growing closer to God, you are able to.

Korbanot and prayers do not completely depend on action, but also the meaning and dedication of the individual. The idea of having good intentions is relevant to life in general, as doing something from your heart and because it's your true desire will always result in a better outcome. ■

Yael Shapiro is a Grade 11 student at TanenbaumCHAT in Toronto.

Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl

During this time of pandemic, we have seen the importance of sealing off national borders to secure the safety of a specific country. We have also witnessed the value of international co-operation to share information, research and best social practices for the protection and preservation of life.

As we begin the Book of Vayikra (Leviticus), we might be struck by its second verse: "Speak to the Children of Israel, and say to them: 'Anyone, when one among you brings near a near-offering to the Lord.' " A sacrificial offering is the most particular form of religious rite commanded of the people of Israel, with all sorts of rules and regulations limiting exposure of non-priests and non-Israelites. At the same time, such a *korban* – translated by Everett Fox as a near-offering – may be brought by "anyone," for all people seek closeness with God. This twofold quality bears similarity to the national and universal responses to COVID-19.

Vayikra reminds us of the need to preserve purity of the person and the place. Only in this way will sacred time and space be possible. We are also called upon to wash hands, disinfect surfaces and avoid unnecessary touching.

Elsewhere in Leviticus, we read of social distancing, as the metzora, one afflicted with a scaly skin disease, is isolated from the community.

We are experiencing comparable quarantines in our communities. Even so, we have been reminded of the importance of caring for one another, of contacting the homebound, shopping for those restricted to their dwellings and being especially careful to protect the elderly. These critical concepts are also articulated in Leviticus, as we are commanded to "love your neighbour as yourself," "leave fallen produce for the poor and the foreigner," and to "show respect for the elderly."

Ancient lessons and sacred wisdom from an ancient and arcane book. ■

Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl is rabbi emeritus at Beth Tzedec Congregation in Toronto.

Rabbi Catharine Clark

The offerings required in the first set of instructions in Leviticus are called *korbanot*. As the Etz Chayim Torah commentary points out, the word *korban* is from a Hebrew root that means "to bring close" or "to come close." In this understanding, sacrifices are a way to come closer to God. Vayikra begins with God calling to Moses so that he could be informed of these instructions. Ramban writes that God had to call Moses because he was scared to come close to God's holiness. God's call to him was reassuring.

Now, as we face COVID-19, we are cautioned against coming close to each other. People who are older or who have other pre-existing conditions fear, wisely, contracting the coronavirus and becoming very ill or dying. People who are not at high risk for these dreadful outcomes fear, wisely, harming the people around them. We are scared to come close, lest we spread the virus.

And yet, social distancing is hard. Without feeling close to others, we risk other real harms. As we follow public health guidelines, we must find other ways to feel close. Now, when many of our normal pursuits are off-limits, is a good time to draw closer to God. If you don't already have a personal prayer practice, develop one. If you don't already have a siddur, borrow or order one. The prayers in a siddur have provided comfort and meaning to the Jewish people through countless crises over the centuries, and they will do so in this crisis too.

We can come closer to God also through study, and many of our study options can bring us virtually closer to our fellow Jews. Hadar, the Jewish Theological Seminary, synagogues and yeshivot are offering online classes. Join one. And young adults, set your bubbe and zayde up with video-conferencing software, such as Zoom, if they aren't already on it. It will keep them close – to you, to their fellow Jews and to God. ■

Rabbi Catharine Clark is the spiritual leader of Congregation Or Shalom, a Conservative synagogue in London, Ont.

Social Scene

Shalva Evening of Enchantment

TORONTO

Canadian Friends of Shalva Gala attendees experienced the amazing music and inspiration provided by the Shalva Band performers. Fresh off their success with Eurovision in Israel, the incredible Shalva Band came from Israel via a short trip to Miami where they performed at several venues including a performance for the president of the United States. These uniquely gifted musicians made this a truly enchanting evening! The Shalva Ambassador Award was given to Lillian Moses and the Shalva Chessed Award was given to Craig Gruzd. ■

Lilliane and Alex Moses

Gala co-chairs, Aleta Shiff, Rebecca McGee, Cookie Bierbrier and excutive director Johanna Brooks

Gala auctioneer Sabrina Strasser

Lindy and Mark Mandelbaum, Avi Samuels and Kalman Samuels

Richard Bearg, Carol Jacobson Bearg and Richard Epstein

Volunteers Michelle Langburt, Nadine Azran, Debbie Hertz, Nanci Soicher (developement executive) and Ruth Goodwin Barth

Pini Avital and Shalva Band (Yair Vonberg, Shai Ben Shushan and Yoseph Ovadia

Lead singer Dina Samte, Amy Sky and lead singer Anael Khalifa

Brian Ginsler and Harry Rosenbaum

JONNI SUPER PHOTOGRAPHY

For details on how to have an event featured in this page, e-mail: thesocialite@thecjn.ca

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

CAROLYN COHEN PHOTO

Gravlax stack with avocado and crispy eggplant

Crispy eggplant

- 1 eggplant, about 9-cm (3-inches) in diameter
- Kosher salt
- 125 ml (½ cup) potato starch
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 80 ml (1/3 cup) matzah meal
- 80 ml (1/3 cup) almond meal/flour
- 125 ml (½ cup) vegetable oil

Dressing

- 125 ml (½ cup) olive oil
- Zest of 1 lemon
- 15 ml (¼ cup) lemon juice
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) honey
- 1 Roma tomato, diced small
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) capers, roughly chopped
- 1 ml (¼ tsp) kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Vegetable stack
- 1 beet gravlax, or a pound of smoked salmon.
- ½ English cucumber, diced small
- 1 ripe but firm avocado, diced small
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) finely chopped chives
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) finely chopped dill
- 3-inch plating ring to make a stack

Slice the eggplant into 2-cm (¼-inch) rounds, place on a paper towel and sprinkle with salt. Let sweat for 15-20 minutes, then blot dry with a paper towel.

Place the potato starch in a shallow bowl. Place the egg in another shallow bowl. In a third shallow bowl, mix together the matzah meal with the almond meal.

Heat a large frypan on medium high heat, add the oil. Dip each slice of eggplant into the potato starch, shake off the excess, then dip it into the egg, shake off excess, then into the matzah meal-almond meal mixture. Fry in the hot oil on each side until golden brown, 3-4 minutes per side. Transfer to a paper towel-lined plate, and let cool.

To prepare the dressing: Mix together the olive oil, lemon zest, lemon juice, honey, tomato, capers, salt and pepper

In a medium bowl, mix the cucumber and avocado together with the dill and chives and a few spoonfuls of the dressing, but leave behind the tomato and capers.

Spray the plating ring with non-stick spray.

To prepare the stack: Place a crispy eggplant slice on a plate, stack the ring on top of the eggplant and spoon the cucumber and avocado mixture into the ring so it fills a little more than halfway up.

Arrange a few slices of gravlax on top of the cucumber-avocado mixture in a circular fashion. Carefully lift off ring. Repeat with the rest of the plates.

Drizzle the stack and the plate with a few spoonfuls of dressing making sure that some capers and tomatoes fall on the plate. Makes 8 servings

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Yoav Limor: Healthy economies essential for peace

STEVE ARNOLD
SPECIAL TO THE CJN, HAMILTON

Yoav Limor, veteran defense correspondent for the newspaper *Israel Hayom* and host of a news show of Channel 1, spoke in Hamilton recently at an event organized by the local office of the Jewish National Fund (JNF). He argues the best hope for peace between Israel and its neighbours lies in economics rather than military action.

What is the political state of Israel today? Are we approaching some kind of stability?

Israel is in a state of political deadlock currently because after three electoral campaigns we have not been able to decide whether it is this side or the other side that should be in power and form a government. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu thought that after the exit polls showed him ahead, he was going to be able to form a government, but it seems now he has no power to do it.

There are three options. One is a unity government. That would take the Blue and White to sit with Netanyahu, which they have said they will not do. The second option is for the Blue and White party to either form a government that relies on the Arab parties. The third option is to go for a fourth election in September.

What is the reluctance to form a government based on the Arab parties?

I think there are three reasons. At the end of the day many Israelis still believe Israel is a Jewish state, a state of the Jewish majority. The second thing is they were never part of the government in the past, although Yitzhak Rabin relied on them in 1997 to form a government. Third is that within the Arab party there is a part that is very radical and supports Hamas, so people ask how can you form a government with a Knesset member who supports our enemies? Jews and Arabs in the Middle East have been an issue forever and it will definitely take time until this issue will be solved.

What is it like as a journalist to try to cover this, to make sense of it all?

That's two different things. To cover it is easy, to make sense of it is impossible because you can't make sense of what doesn't make sense. There is no sense that Israel is deadlocked, that Israel is only busy with whether to go for Netanyahu or against Netanyahu. The only thing Israel is busy with for the past year is, as we say, to Bibi or not to Bibi? The citizens of the state are more important than any prime minister, no matter who he is. That is something Israel should get over and get back to dealing with Israel and not one person or another.

Where is the best hope for peace?

I think with the Arab world as a whole. The Arab world has taken a huge step toward Israel since the Arab Spring. I don't know that peace is the right word, but I think there is a possibility to see a normalization with most of the Arab world, mostly in the Gulf states. With the Palestinians it will be more complicated. I don't see "the deal of century" as a breakthrough. It is a very good deal for Israel, but I don't see it as a practical solution because it definitely won't bring the Palestinians in.

Is that simply because of the Palestinians' history of never missing an opportunity to miss an opportunity?

It's because "the deal of the century" is one-sided. It is very much in favour of Israel and the demands it makes of the Palestinians are impossible for any Palestinian leader to agree to. I don't like the fact this deal has been imposed on us by the Americans. I think we should speak to the Palestinians ourselves to reach any kind of deal that is balanced. We should do it, they should do it, but we lack leadership. I don't see any Palestinian leader taking these tough decisions, definitely not Mahmoud Abbas. He is not taking tough decisions. I don't see any solution with the Palestinians currently and that's why we should try to look for other options, such as economic solutions, trying to live with them together, dealing with the level of their living, how they are living and try to raise them up.

Israeli journalist and television commentator Yoav Limor spoke in Hamilton recently.
STEVE ARNOLD PHOTO

So, some sort of solution based on economics seems to have the best promise?

Maybe. I think we should invest in that, the world should invest in that. I think it's not in the interest of anyone, Israelis, Palestinians and the world for there to be an imbalance in the world. That is a good solution that we should all dig into and try to use.

Israel is exceptionally strong now, stronger perhaps than it has been at other times in the past. What's the source of that strength?

First of all, we are a regional superpower when it comes to technology and military, but at the same time the weakness of the Arab states following the Arab Spring changed the balance dramatically in favour of Israel. As strong as we were, we became stronger because our enemies became weaker. It could change, but Israel is strong and safe now and I don't see any existential threat to Israel in the near future.

Not even a nuclear Iran?

That is not in the cards currently. It's hypothetical. Israel should do everything it can to prevent that, the world should do everything it can to prevent that. Should Iran become nuclear, which I hope it won't, we will deal with that question, but it is not nuclear now so that is not on the table.

What are the chief threats other than a nuclear Iran?

I don't think of them as threats, I think of them as challenges. Hezbollah and the 100,000 missiles they have in Lebanon and might shoot at Israel; Hamas and the 2 million people living in Gaza, in the biggest jail in the world. We face many other challenges within Israel – health, education, construction and others. We also face many challenges within the Jewish people itself, the amount of hatred that was ignited during those three electoral campaigns is enormous, left and right, secular and religious, settlers and non-settlers. Those are huge problems. Relations with the Jewish Diaspora are also an issue. There are quite a few challenges that Israel has to face to be safe in the future.

What is it going to take to face those challenges?

Strong government and good leadership, like everywhere else. ■

This interview has been edited and condensed for style and clarity

Sonny Goldstein, CFP
President

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The tragic tale of Simon Abeles

BILL GLADSTONE
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

As Jews throughout history have been all too aware, tragedy, whether large or small, is never all that distant from the everyday realm of human affairs.

This sad chain of events took place in Prague in 1693 and 1694. The central figure was a 12-year-old boy named Simon Abeles who came from a well-known Jewish family. He was the grandson of Moses ben David Bunzel Abeles, the "*primátor*" or mayor of the Jewish community of Prague.

Simon was unhappy at home and had bitter disagreements with his father, a merchant named Lazar Abeles. At the time a local Jesuit order, St. Clement's, was conducting an aggressive missionary campaign, intended to attract and convert Jewish adolescents to Christianity. Simon ran away and found shelter among the Jesuits, who began to instruct him in the basics of the Christian faith.

In this religious tug-of-war over souls, it mattered little that the boy was hardly of an age to give his informed consent; nor was parental consent considered a factor. Simon allegedly agreed to be baptized and was "secretly preparing for the sacrament at the Jesuit College in the Old Town of Prague."

Even after his father found him and brought him back home, Simon continued his rebellion. Push led to shove until matters took a tragic turn. What actually happened remains unverified but, according to one source, the father and a cousin, Löbl Kurzhandl, "gave the boy such a severe beating that he fell and broke his neck."

Rather than face up to what they had done, the two hurriedly buried the boy and claimed he had died of natural causes. But as Shakespeare wrote in *The Merchant of Venice*, "Murder cannot be hid long . . . [and] in the end truth will out." For manslaughter, it is much the same.

A "denunciation" from an unknown party brought the affair to the attention of the authorities, and the body was exhumed for a basic post-mortem examination. Evidence of what we might now call "foul play" was found, and those same "authorities" (for there were no police in those days) detained the father, his third wife, and their cook.

> At least one popular song made the rounds, extolling Simon's pure faith and lamenting his tragic end, "killed by his father in a moment wild," and instilling the "grief of the vast multitude."

The father, his soul tortured and now fearful of being bodily tortured, hung himself in prison with his phylacteries. Then the authorities arrested the cousin, Kurtzhandl, who would stand trial on charges of murder and "*in odium fidei*," contempt for the Christian faith. Meanwhile, the boy was received as a glorious martyr by the Church and buried in a public ceremony in the Tyn Church of Prague.

Upon his conviction, Kurtzhandl was sentenced to be "broken on a wheel," an extremely cruel method of execution that involved the crushing of bones. But the Bohemian appellate court reduced his punishment to beheading after he confessed to the accidental killing and consented to be baptized.

Seeking to beatify Simon, the Jesuits published a hagiographic narrative of how he suffered and died for his faith and the sensational trial that followed. In the 1960s the Jewish Museum of Prague acquired a copy of this very rare book after it surfaced in a second-hand bookshop.

Not surprisingly, it provides a Christianized and highly biased version of events replete with miracles, improvised facts, and much antagonism towards the Jews. It also contains several illustrations of the poor martyr, including one where he is being greeted reverentially by angels in the clouds as he ascends to heaven.

At least one popular song made the rounds, extolling Simon's pure faith and lamenting his tragic end, "killed by his father in a moment wild," and instilling the "grief of the vast multitude." According to a historical *Chronicle of Bohemia* from 1854, poor Simon "was buried with great pomp as a martyr, in a glass coffin, on the right side of the altar in the Tyn Minster in Prague."

Just another footnote of history as the wheel of human fortunes continues its relentless spin. ■

Ask Ella

Managing Passover and shivahs through COVID-19

Ella Burakowski
eb@thecjn.ca

Dear Ella,

This Passover is like no other. I'm a daughter of elderly parents and a mother of two kids in university. We have a fair-sized family and usually our seders are about 25 people who all come together.

With social distancing becoming a reality in our everyday lives and Passover being around the corner, I have no idea if I should host the seder as usual this year.

I'm afraid for my parents to be with so many people in close quarters. I'm afraid to have my in-laws, who have just come back from Florida. I'm afraid of this whole thing. If I don't host, what will everyone do for Pesach? What should I do?

Pass on Passover

Dear Pass on Passover,

Social distancing is the strategy our health system has put in place to try to stop the spread of the coronavirus. Without everyone taking their responsibility seriously, we could be in the same boat as China or Italy in a matter of days or weeks.

We are dealing with a global pandemic with a higher mortality rate for the elderly population and medically challenged.

Your parents fit that category, as do your in-laws. Add to that, your in-laws are supposed to be in self-isolation, as they have just come back from Florida.

I realize that Passover is one of the most important Jewish holidays. That's what makes it so hard to prioritize. Your heart is telling you to have the seder, but your brain is scared to death that someone you love might get sick.

This year, everyone should be having their seders with as few people as possible. Ideally, the people you live with only. If you are not observant, you can have a virtual seder through FaceTime, Skype, Zoom or other technologies.

Each person who is not taking this seriously is putting other lives at risk. Are you willing to gamble?

Here are some thoughts on how to have a safer seder: avoid guests from other households; plate the food in the kitchen, rather than passing around dishes or serving buffet style; wear protective gloves when making matzah, maror and haroset sandwiches. Washing hands is part of the seder – twice – but you can do it even more. Keep wipes and sanitizer available. Add a special prayer to remind us of why this night is different than all others. Don't let this plague take over your seder. It can still be warm and meaningful. Use common sense. Stay safe. Hag sameach.

Dear Ella,

I'm worried about my mother. Her last remaining sister passed away this week.

My mother is petrified to sit shivah because of COVID-19, but she's feeling so guilty. She doesn't want to deal with a house full of visitors and she doesn't want to offend anyone by refusing to hug or take their hand or even air kiss.

By the time you get this, we will have worked something out, but I would be curious to know your thoughts.

Virus Gone Viral

Dear Virus Gone Viral,

To lose someone as close as a sister is devastating. To be torn about sitting shivah is something she should not have to add to her already heavy heart.

Your mom is right to be concerned and cautious. Her health is a priority above everything else.

Your poor mother is torn. Give her the permission she is seeking to mourn for her sister in her way. She doesn't have to mourn alone, though. State publicly that the shivah is private. At the same time, reach out to the people you feel would want to pay a shivah call and possibly arrange for them to come one at a time, and practise social distancing.

The best way however, is through FaceTime, Skype, WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. There are many alternatives for people to pay a virtual shivah call.

I'm sure people will understand. Don't forget, visitors are nervous as well. They will probably be relieved and appreciate the efforts you are making. At the same time, you are lessening their stress of making a shivah call as well. Condolences by phone or email is also an alternative. COVID-19 has changed how we do things. ■

Ella is the author of Hidden Gold - A True Story of the Holocaust. *Her advice is not a replacement for medical, legal or any other advice. For serious problems, consult a professional.*

OBITUARIES AND RELATED NOTICES

STEELES MEMORIAL CHAPEL

Lorber, Theodore	March 8,2020	Private
Moses, Rachel	March 9, 2020	Private
Walsh, Murray Lionel	March 10, 2020	100 Barclay St
Akilov, Mazal	March 10, 2020	27 Givon St
Vogelhut, Hersh Harry	March 10, 2020	95 Weldrick Rd E
Kohl, Sam	March 11, 2020	3 Riverview Dr
Applebaum, Stephen Paul	March 11, 2020	718 Tanwood Dr
Klingman, Laurane	March 12, 2020	194 Thornway Ave
Krawczyk, Mary Mania	March 11, 2020	38 Avenue Rd
Feinstein, Dianne	March 12, 2020	155 Taylor Dr
Winitskaia, Musia	March 12, 2020	Private
Garnet, Sylvia	March 12, 2020	Private
Miller, Ashley	March 13, 2020	Private
Urovitz, Bernice	March 13, 2020	Private
Tuschak, Veronica	March 15, 2020	Private
Teper, Paulina	March 16, 2020	Private
Korn, Sheldon	March 16, 2020	120 Shelbourne Ave
Khmelnitsky, Anneta	March 16, 2020	Private
Demeter, Anna	March 16, 2020	Private

BENJAMIN'S PARK MEMORIAL CHAPEL

Roman Sapozhnikov	Mar 7/20	1 Clark Avenue West
Sylvia Marksfield	Mar 8/20	1 Concorde Place
Ettie Myers	Mar 11/20	9700 Bathurst Street
Gordon Urbach	Mar 11/20	2 Neptune Drive
Vivien Cohen	Mar 11/20	523 Douglas Avenue
Dolores Abramson	Mar 11/20	561 Avenue Road
Harry Weiss	Mar 12/20	546 Steeles Avenue West
Ben Tregebov	Mar 14/20	7 North Park Road
Agnes Nemet	Mar 14/20	7900 Bathurst Street
Sally Rosen	Mar 14/20	31 Denmark Crescent
Morris Greenbaum	Mar 14/20	151 Charlton Blvd
Aaron Novack	Mar 13/20	539 Cranbrooke Avenue
George Lantos	Mar 15/20	85 Skymark Drive
Ruth Lesser	Mar 14/20	14 Pineview Crescent
Beatrice Flom	Mar 15/20	3560 Bathurst Street
Simone Mandelman	Mar 15/20	1121 Steeles Avenue West
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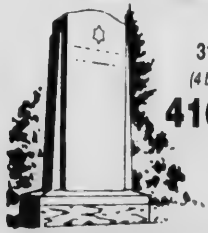

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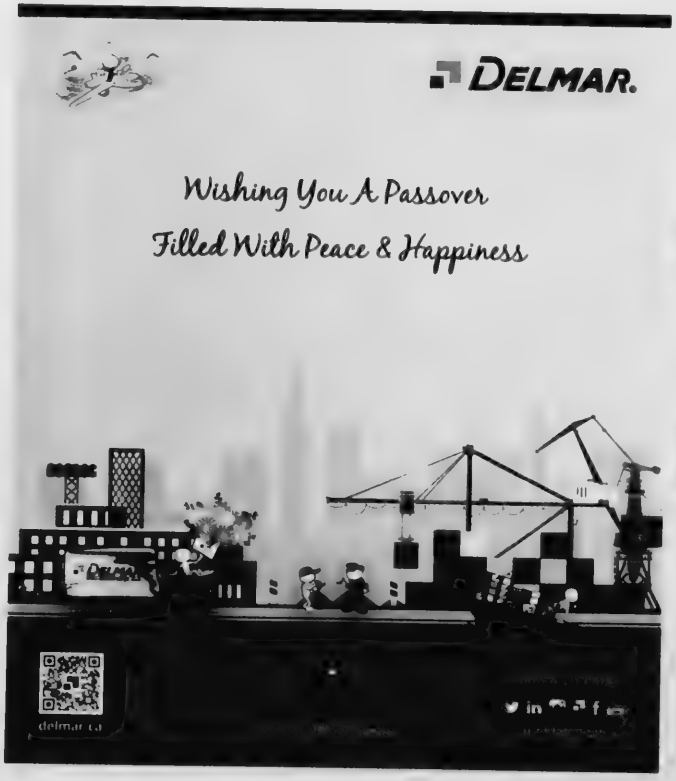

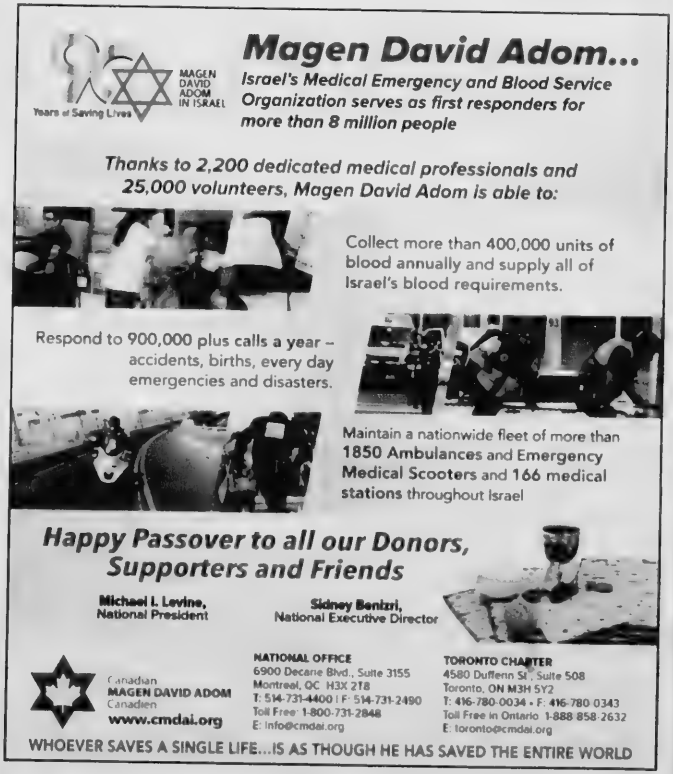
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WHOEVER SAVES A SINGLE LIFE...IS AS THOUGH HE HAS SAVED THE ENTIRE WORLD

How I Dressed for Purim

SHIRLEY MUHLSTOCK BRODT

Plotnick, Greenbaum and Shipovsky. Sounds like a law firm, I know, but actually those are the names of the beit din rabbis who, many years ago, granted my Jewish divorce. Abraham Plotnick, Moishe Greenbaum as the spokesman. And let me tell you, what a shocker that whole procedure was. They wouldn't give me my *get* until I promised to continue sending my eight boys to yeshivah! Can you believe it? There I was, with *sheitel* and long skirt and stretch marks, but it didn't matter. They knew my soon-to-be-ex-husband's family but they didn't know mine, since I hadn't been so religious growing up, so they thought I might send my little darlings to – what? A Catholic school, an ashram, or, worse yet, a Conservative Hebrew school? They blackmailed me, that's what they did. And I played along to get that *get*, but let me tell you something. What I was thinking was this: I'll get you for this. Each and every one of you.

Over the years I did my research. Call it stalking if you're fussy. And this is what I learned.

Plotnick left for work precisely at 8:15 each day. In one hand he carried a briefcase and in the other a car pillow. He always returned late at night, carrying both. What's with the pillow? Maybe he used it to be higher up on his car seat. He was, after all, very short – not more than five feet, three inches tall. If that was the case, though, why did he carry it into his house when he returned? Maybe he had hemorrhoids. *Halevai.*

Greenbaum had a problem walking (his left leg was shorter than his right), he walked the same route to his shul every day, and he kept on tripping when he crossed the street because he wasn't looking where he was going. Also, his eyeglasses were so thick that you could barely see his eyeballs.

Shipovsky was left-handed – I could tell because he always carried his tallit bag in that hand. He lived right across from the Va'ad Hair and davened at the shul three blocks from my home.

Over those same years, my humiliation remained and festered like a pus-filled sore on my *neshamah*. How to get justice, that was the problem, and I just couldn't come up with a workable solution. Believe me, I thought of almost everything: sending threatening letters, having *treif* pizza delivered to their home, phoning them for years motza'ei Shabbat at two in the morning and hanging up, kidnapping their firstborn son – you get the picture. But these solutions had their problems. For the letters, I don't write that well and also I didn't want to waste good postage. For the pizza, they'd be able to call Domino's and find out who made the order, and also it would cost a fortune. I'd rather put the money in tzedakah. For the phoning, I realized that that would involve my staying up motza'ei Shabbat for years, and I had better things to do with my time. For the kidnapping, my house is too small, and I had no desire to start cooking for their offspring, and how would I even restrain them? Tie them up with their own tefillin? And should I leave them tied up while I went to shul on Shabbat? You see the problems. Maybe you know better about kidnapping protocol.

Anyhow, to continue my story, let me just say that some things are bashert.

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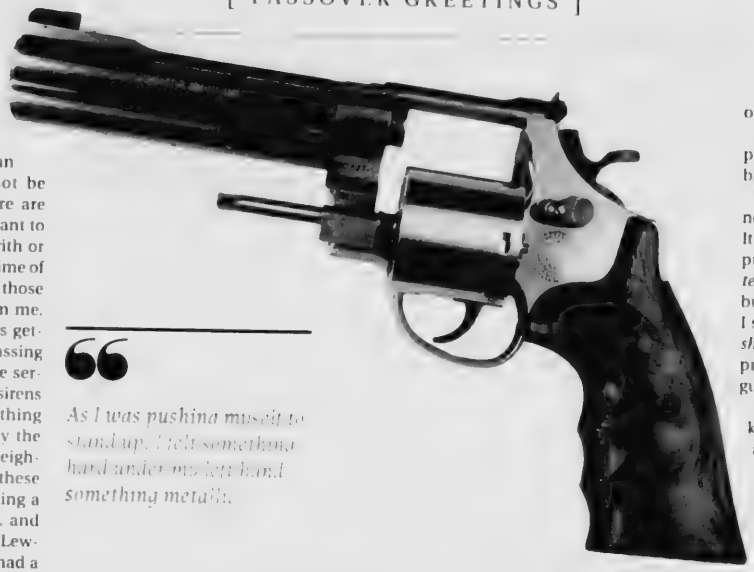

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I live in a very peaceful neighbourhood, so peaceful that you can walk outside at midnight and not be afraid. Or almost not afraid. There are tiny sections where you wouldn't want to be caught dead walking around, with or without your *sheitel*, no matter the time of day or night. For example, in one of those tiny sections, four blocks over from me, live three teenagers who are always getting into trouble, and with each passing year, their troublemaking gets more serious. One night I heard these police sirens screaming down the street. Something bad had happened, but it was only the next morning that my next-door neighbour, Gittel Pinchuk, told me that these hoodlums were picked up for robbing a convenience store two blocks over, and according to the store owner, Leib Lewinsky (no relation to Monica), they had a gun! And Gittel, who heard it from Lewinsky himself, said that although the boys swore they didn't use a gun, the police were busy searching for one. And all this happened in my neighbourhood! Gevalt!

Anyhow, two blocks over from me is a mailbox at the corner, and the grass around it is overgrown and the ground is rocky, so you have to step into the grass and on top of the rocks and pebbles to mail your letter. That afternoon I went to mail a birthday card to my second son's fifth daughter, such a lovely girl, *kayn aynhoreh*! The grass seemed taller than ever, and as I tried to reach the mailbox, I tripped over a rock hidden by the grass.

> *As I was pushing myself to stand up, I felt something hard under my left hand, something metallic.*

I fell into the grass like a klutz. I was glad that you weren't there to see how stupid I looked, since my derriere was in the air and my *sheitel* had fallen off.

As I was pushing myself to stand up, I felt something hard under my left hand, something metallic, something I couldn't believe I felt because I only ever saw one on TV. What to do, what to do?

And then my humiliation triumvirate popped into my head – and there's your bashert!

So I looked around to make sure that no one saw me, and I picked up the gun. It's definitely hard to hide a gun in your purse while you're putting your *sheitel* back on your head without a mirror, but I did it. Only when I came home did I see that in my nervousness, I'd put my *sheitel* on backwards, but no matter. The problem was, where should I stash the gun?

The good thing about having grown kids and not being in the mood to find another husband is that I live alone. And being a private sort of person, I don't listen to my neighbours who say I'm difficult – hardly anyone comes to visit. Except my next-door neighbour Gittel, who never looks in my closets. How do I know this? Because I never leave her alone when she's here since I don't trust her for a second. I doubt you'd trust Gittel yourself 'cause she's a yenta of the worst sort. I think she visits me just to get away from her husband, or maybe it's because she likes my blintzes.

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So the gun I put inside my third *sheitel* box, and it fit quite nicely after I removed the Styrofoam head. That head I put at the back of my underwear drawer because who would think to look there?

It took me a few weeks to figure out how to use the gun. I practiced for hours every day, except on Shabbat of course. If you're thinking of learning how to use a gun, make sure you go to the library to do a computer search because you don't want anyone checking your browser history at home or having the RCMP track your gun research. God forbid. Also, be thankful you don't have to get a divorce. They seem to cause a lot of problems.

Soon it was time. It was also Purim night. I'd figured out my costume, and if I do say so myself, I thought it was pretty ingenious. I thought my whole plan was pretty ingenious. Now bear with me and I'll explain. Since the whole neighbourhood knows me as the frum woman who lives upstairs from our *rosh yeshiva*, all I had to do was dress up as a non-religious man, and since ours was a mostly frum neighbourhood, who would bother looking closely at a stranger? And since our esteemed *rosh yeshiva* and his rebbetzin were travelling this year to Poughkeepsie to be with their oldest son and his 18 children for Purim (the son's wife left him only three months ago for a widower, Nachum Shipovsky, my Shipovsky's second cousin once removed), no one would be downstairs to watch my comings and goings.

And since my children aren't speaking to me and never call, no one would know that I'm not home.

I went to hear the *megillah* reading at the shul where Shipovsky davens. I made sure to sit near his wife, and we talked about the robbery and the missing gun and what was happening to our neighbourhood. A nice woman. As soon as I came home, I ate a bit of something to break the fast. Then, dressed in a pair of blue jeans that I'd found in a bag at the clothes drop-off centre and wearing a pair of non-prescription glasses and with my short hair free of any covering save for a hockey toque that I ordered from Amazon for $14.99 plus tax and with a new pair of Yom Kippur running shoes also from Amazon and not cheap, believe me, I was ready. Except for the red nose bulb that I found in the dollar store and that I would put on at the last minute. I figured that if someone saw me, God forbid, all they'd remember would be my bulbous nose. I waited until it was good and late so that the Purim festivities would still be going on or finished and my triple quarry would be all *shickered* up.

Plotnick was my first unlucky contestant. I found him just as he was getting out of his car. He bent down to grab his car pillow – were his hemorrhoids getting worse? – and I shot him smack in his behind. Oy, did he ever shriek, and he slid to the ground, banging his head on the car frame.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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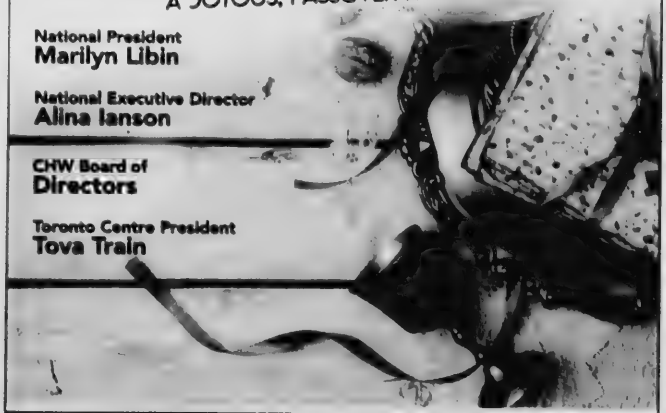

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Chag Kasher V'Sameach.

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It's lucky that I walk very quickly and everyone lives near everyone else. It wasn't too far to Greenbaum's house. There he was, tripping and almost home, definitely drunk and not looking where he was going. I came up behind him and shot him in the right leg. Even if he'd wanted to see me, he couldn't. His eyeglasses had flown off as he fell, and I stepped on them just because.

> *When I came home, I felt a great sense of peace*

Next was Shipovsky. That was a bit more difficult as I had to hide behind the shul until he finished vomiting up all that he'd drunk to forget Haman and remember Mordechai. I aimed at and shot him in his right arm. If I do say so myself, I'd learned how to shoot pretty well. I like to do things to perfection.

I tell you, that was a long night. But when I came home, I felt a great sense of peace and wasn't tired in the least. I stayed up the rest of the night so that I could daven bright and early. It was only when I was saying the *Shema* that I realized how perfectly justice had finally been done: "... And you shall speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road, when you lie down and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign upon your hand...."

For the foreseeable future, at least, Plotnick wouldn't be sitting in his house, Greenbaum walking on the road, or Shipovsky donning his tefillin. ■

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Next year in Jerusalem.

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Michael Frankel, Chair
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Monument

ZAV LEVINSON

I return to the old neighbourhood of winding staircases
wrought-iron railings, duplexes and triplexes
huddled together in this city built for winter.

Children shout in lanes, have temper tantrums.
Pigeons peck through garbage and do not fear you.
A thousand stories live in the chipped paint and leaded glass.

This was my mother's neighbourhood growing up a hundred years ago.
You could buy a live chicken and watch it be butchered.
Waldman's long tables on Roy Street (as her generation called it)
loaded up with fresh fish, smoked-meat sandwiches
for ten cents, St. Lawrence Bakery with its old-world smells
of rye bread, pumpernickel and onion rolls, now closed

twenty-five years. But I think my mother would recognize
something, some memory would stir in her if she walked
on The Main today. The mountain's east face, clifflike,

still looms above it all. Families still picnic in Fletcher's Field.
Though the Yiddish speakers of her childhood, their prayers
and arguments, all the dust and turmoil of a living people

that once graced these narrow streets – gone. This vanished world
embedded like fossils in the weathered brick and stone
finds a kindred spirit in me, my mother's son.

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We're finally here
Pesach!
When breadcrumbs grind to a halt

Do the Amex Dance
You already know in advance
That bill, that bill – not much of a thrill
Yet Pesach's a blessing and a gift

Shout the Redemption Holler
Whether you're simpleton or scholar
We are slaves no longer
Our nation ever stronger
Oh see the sun rising just now!

Take front, centre stage as member
Of our holy nation
Four questions, four cups and a whole lot of fuss
To enhance the *yom tov* celebration

(Last but not least
On the Passover list)
Relive the story – from pyramids to frog
May it be *this* year in Jerusalem
Wishing all a joyous *chag*.

Bill 21

PIXABAY PHOTO

KELP STOLLON

I am not embarrassed to say
That I have never worn my glasses on top of my head.
Never. Not even for a moment.
In my entire life.
Nor do I ever imagine myself doing so.
Okay, perhaps I have imagined it.
And perhaps I have even tried to do it.
Tried to position those glasses
In a way that is strange to me.
The part of the glasses that normally rests
On my nose
Would have to rest on top of my head,
Nested in my hair.
I can't bring myself to do it.
It's not that I am not adventurous
Or open to new experiences.
But glasses on the head just seems absurd
To me.
It doesn't make sense to me.

I know some people think it's cool.
Or fashionable.
Or aesthetically pleasing.
Or convenient, yes,
I understand that one may want to have one's glasses close by and easily accessible.
Where you know you can find them.
Practical, right?
But that's the irony, right?
The subject of many a joke and many a cute poem.
Searching all over for the glasses that you forgot were on your head.

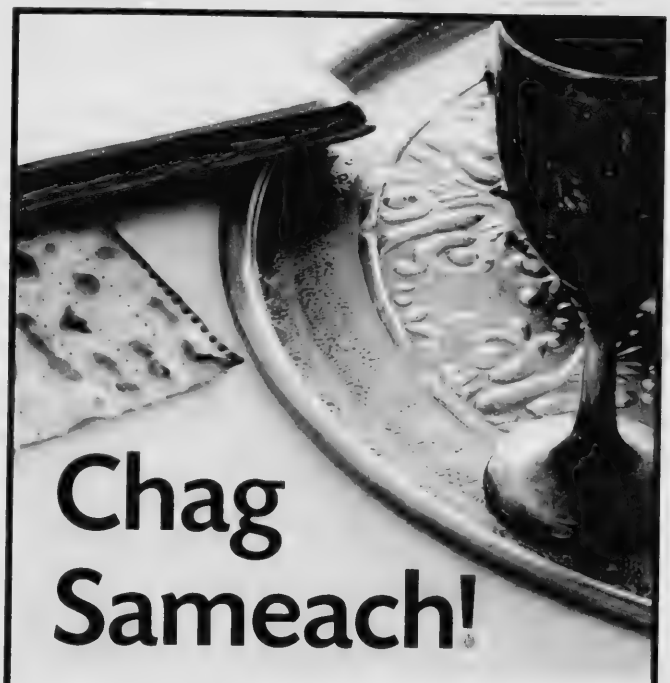
I wish that was all there was to it.
A quirky joke. An eccentricity.
But there's more.
I am embarrassed to say
I am repulsed by these people.
I find them foolish and absurd.

They have something on their heads
That shouldn't be on their heads
And they act like everything is normal.
Don't they know that the normal way to wear glasses
Is on your nose?

Around the neck on a chain
Doesn't seem to bother me as much.
But glasses on the head
Ignites some kind of hostility.
Touches a nerve.
I can't carry on a conversation.
I find myself fixating on the glasses.
I breathe in. I breathe out.
Why can't I relax?
Why can't I chill?
What did anyone with glasses on their head ever do to me?
Nothing. Nothing that I can recall.
Everyone has a right to wear their glasses wherever they want to.
Why should I care?
They can wear their glasses on their feet.
In between their toes.
They can wear them on their butt.
They can wear them in their butt.
Okay, I have gone too far, I'm sorry.
I am really quite civilized, with regard to most things.
A liberal, really.
But these glasses on the head.
What can I do about it?
Is it my problem or is it their problem?

I know. I know. I know it's my problem.
I need to deal with my feelings.
I need to be more accepting.
I need to accept that not everyone feels the same as I do
About glasses.
I am going to work on it.

But it's going to take a lot of work.



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The Mitzvah

LORNE MILLER

My aunt and uncle, Moe and Polly Caren, were looking forward to spending their retirement years in their new home in the country. Moe had owned and operated Caren's Pharmacy at the corner of Côte-Ste-Catherine Road and Cote-des-Neiges, directly across the road from Montreal's Jewish General Hospital, for 40 years. It was time for him to slow down. He was tired of waking up every morning at six o'clock and fighting Montreal's bitter winters to open the store by seven. He wouldn't miss being woken up in the middle of the night by a customer who had dropped his medications into the toilet and needed an emergency replacement. It had been a hard life, albeit a satisfying one. The offer to sell his store couldn't come at a better time. Pharmaprix, otherwise known as Shoppers Drug Mart in the rest of Canada, was expanding into Quebec, and Moe Caren's pharmacy was near the top of their list of potential acquisitions. The sale proved to be a very good deal for both the buyer and the seller.

Moe and Polly's new home in Hemmingford, in the Eastern Townships, 65 kilometres east of Montreal, was a dream come true. It was a fully restored two-storey cottage with a large front porch overlooking the main street of the town. The property included a half-acre backyard with a small grove of apple trees for which a neighbouring farmer leased the harvesting rights. All the other houses on the street had beautifully manicured front lawns bedecked with magnificent flower gardens. After settling into their new home, the first thing on Moe and Polly's to-do list that spring was to upgrade their front lawn.

Moe slept in that beautiful May morning, waking up at 7:30 rather than 6 as he had done for the past 40 years. After having his usual breakfast – stewed prunes, oatmeal and hot tea, served in a glass with two sugar cubes and a wedge of lemon – Moe went to the shed in the back, took out a shovel and spade, and started to dig up a flowerbed in the front of the house. He was working for 10 or 15 minutes when a young Frenchman, about 20 years old or so, walked by and introduced himself as his neighbour, André.

"Let me help you. I enjoy working on the land."

The young man picked up a shovel and started digging. Three hours later the stranger was still hard at work preparing the land for a much larger flowerbed than Moe had planned. As noon approached Polly set up a table on the front porch and brought out a delicious summer lunch of which any *balabusta* would be proud: cold borsht with sour cream and a boiled potato, a salmon salad sandwich and a slice of her famous strudel bursting with fresh apples from her own backyard. Following lunch and a short chat, André insisted on finishing what he started and completed the job by mid-afternoon.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

happy
passover

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healthy and **happy** Passover

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

Moe realized that he and Polly would have a much larger bed that they could hope for and eagerly took out his wallet to pay the young man. It was an excellent job and he had earned every penny. André refused to accept anything for his labour. A friendly argument ensued until André sat down to explain to his new neighbour why he could not accept any payment.

A few weeks earlier he had been visiting New York City for the first time in his life. It was an exciting visit, but the day before he had planned to leave the Big Apple, he lost his wallet and found himself in a terrible predicament. He was a stranger in a strange city and the wallet contained everything he needed to get home – his money, his train ticket and his passport. The young man frantically retraced all his steps that day hoping, in vain, to find the missing wallet, but to no avail. In a panic he finally returned to his hotel where he was informed that somebody had dropped by and left him a message. It was a note from a stranger that indicated they had found his wallet. The note included a telephone number. Not even thinking the note could be some sort of scam, André immediately telephoned the finder and they agreed to meet at his hotel room later that day.

André described the stranger as a tall, soft-spoken, fully bearded man with sideburns hanging down to his shoulders. He wore a long black coat and a large black-brimmed hat. In spite of his rather strange appearance he was very warm and friendly as he handed the lost wallet back to André. To the young Frenchman's surprise, the wallet and its contents were fully intact. Nothing was missing. André immediately opened up his wallet and took out a wad of money as a well-deserved finder's fee for the stranger. But the man refused to accept anything. He explained to André that he was happy to be able to help a visitor in trouble. As the man left, he said the greatest reward André could give him was to promise to do a good deed for a stranger.

As André finished his story he thanked Moe for the opportunity to fulfill his promise to the strange man. As André went on his way, he did say that the best reward Moe could give him was to do a good deed for someone else sometime in the future.

These chance encounters between a young French Canadian, a Hasidic man from New York City and my uncle, Moe Caren, illustrate a longstanding Jewish tradition. A person who does a good deed should not expect to be thanked for his or her thoughtfulness. On the contrary, the person who performs a mitzvah should thank the recipient for the opportunity to fulfill a sacred commandment. ■

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The Aerogram

ABE MARGEL

Paris was hot and humid. Even now, 20 years after the war, city buses were still in short supply. Getting around was difficult unless you had your own car, which Fredrick did not. He walked with a slight limp but this did not make him look frail – far from it. He appeared brawny and bearlike, a man who could cause an opponent harm. Fredrick's deep-set brown eyes and lined face did not soften his menacing appearance.

Upon reaching home he said hello to the concierge, an old woman who lived on the first floor by the entrance, and made his way up the dark stairwell to the apartment building's third floor. The smell of chicken soup and rice filled the building hallway. Fredrick searched his pants' pockets for his keys and unlocked the ancient door. Inside on a tired sofa sat his wife, Adelyn, sewing. Their little daughter Simone was on the floor playing with two dolls and a cardboard box shaped into the form of a house. Supper was waiting.

"You have a letter," said Adelyn.

"A letter? No one writes to me." He picked up the pale blue paper, an aerogram folded and sealed in the shape of a letter.

"It's from Israel," said Simone.

"Yes, I can see that."

"Open it!" said the little girl.

With a kitchen knife he carefully opened the letter. The German writing was tiny and precise but it only filled half the page. He read it over slowly, stood up and poured himself a glass of wine. Then he picked up the letter again.

"What is it?" said Adelyn.

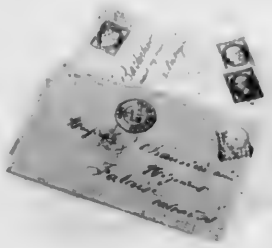
"I'm not sure. I have to read it again. It's from my cousin Anna in Eilat."

"Is everything alright?"

"Yes, she's fine. Her husband and sons are all in good health." He blinked back a tear. "My aunt, my dead aunt Sarah, her name came up under the strangest of circumstances."

Fredrick reread the letter then put it down. The expression on his face was one of confusion and surprise. Adelyn picked it up but since she knew only French she could make neither head nor tail of it.

> *The German writing was tiny and precise but it only filled half the page.*



"I have to go to Israel for a week or so," said Fredrick. "Rafael can look after the store. It will be fine."

"But I don't understand," said Adelyn. "If everything is all right with your cousin, why go to visit now?"

"I have someone else to see there. Someone I haven't laid eyes on since the war. It's important I go." He took a deep breath. "My cousin saw her, recognized her from the camp. Anna followed her and now I have the address."

"Who? What is this all about?"

"It's an old story. I'll tell you when I return. But I have to have a word with this woman."

"Who, Anna?"

"No, not Anna."

The El Al flight landed at Lod Airport just outside of Tel Aviv. He spent the night at a modest hotel on Yehuda ha-Levi Street. The following morning he made his way to the Central Bus Station on Salomon Street. From there it was a half-hour bus ride to Bat Yam.

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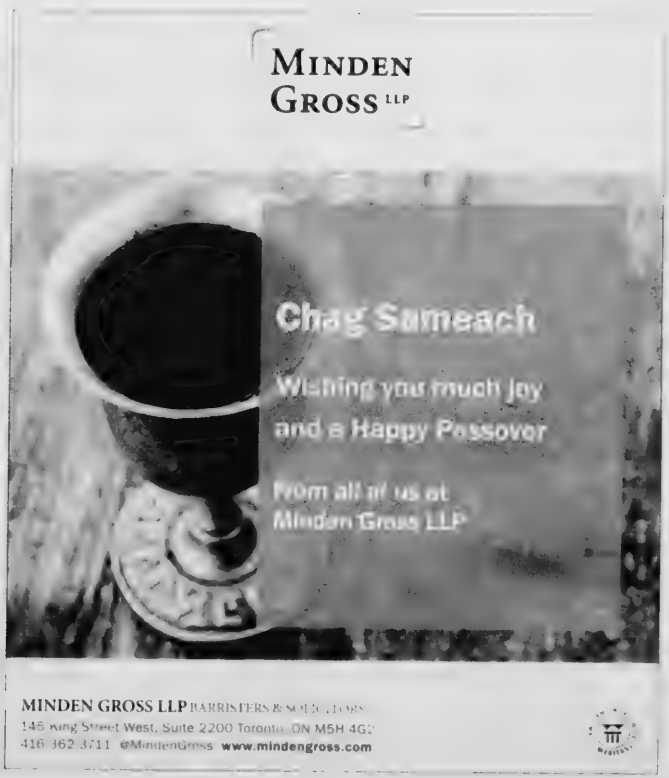
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In his hand he firmly held the aerogram. Fredrick walked and walked but could not find the address he was looking for. Bat Yam in those days was a new town with streets and apartment blocks all cookie-cutter, in the Soviet style of construction. It was hot, very hot, and the Levantine sun showed no pity. He checked the piece of paper, read and reread the address. He stopped a woman pushing a baby carriage and, speaking to her in German-accented French, asked for her help.

She shook her head and pointed down the street. "*Magasin*," she said and continued on her way.

The *magasin* was a store, Fredrick discovered, that sold used suitcases and ancient radios. A man in his mid-40s ran the place. Fredrick asked him for directions.

In perfect French, he was told, "But the owner, I knew the woman well, she died only last week." The shopkeeper sighed deeply. "Such a kind woman, very quiet and generous. She volunteered in a home for the aged even though she was not young herself. The good woman was particularly helpful to my old grandfather. I often found them sitting together in the shade of a tree on the north side of the nursing home where he would chatter endlessly about his life in Tangiers before the war."

Fredrick nodded as if in agreement. "Yes, I knew her too. I was only 14 years old when they sent me to Auschwitz. That's where I met her." He began to tear up, took a handkerchief out of his pocket and wiped his eyes. "For years I looked for her and only just discovered her whereabouts. She was one of the Germans who did medical experiments on me. A sadistic bitch she was."

"No," said the shop owner. "You must be mistaken. It can't be."

"I want to see her apartment; there must be something there that will bring the truth to light."

"It's locked. There's no point in going there. Government officials are still looking for her family to wind things up, sell the place."

Fredrick made his way down the near-empty streets, save for the odd truck and donkey cart. In his right hand he now held a rough map drawn by the storeowner. The new subdivision was bare of any trees. It was a grim sight. The roads were lined with small four-storey apartment blocks with nothing to distinguish one from the other. When he reached Tabenkin Street, Fredrick hesitated for a minute then, carried on walking. He stopped in front of a drab concrete building.

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The mailboxes were between the ground floor bomb shelter and the stairwell leading up. Fredrick's heart leaped when he saw the name of his dead aunt on one of the mailboxes. The last time he saw his father's sister she was being herded toward the gas chambers along with other family members.

The Nazi nurse had stolen his Aunt Sara's identity and made it her own. Now seeing before his own eyes how the German had taken his murdered aunt's name made him feel sick and angry.

He hesitated for only a moment. Climbing slowly up to the top storey Fredrick couldn't explain to himself why he felt compelled to be on this pointless mission. The monster was, after all, dead. When he reached the door of her apartment he found it locked. The lock mechanism was old-fashioned, requiring only a skeleton key. But Fredrick had no key, no tools. He took a step back, then, with one mighty kick, broke the door down.

The tiny apartment was bereft of any ornamentation except for a framed photograph on a small mahogany chest of drawers. Fredrick picked it up in his shaking hands. A family picture: two adults and three children. The man was wearing a First World War German uniform. The studio backdrop was one of mountains. In the lower left-hand corner of the large photograph, wedged between the frame and glass, was a tiny picture, jaggedly cut. Fredrick pulled it out and held it close to his face. "Yes," he whispered. "It's her, nurse Gerda Müller, Lieutenant Müller." Only the collar of her SS uniform was visible below her face.

> *The tiny apartment was bereft of any ornamentation except for a framed photograph.*

Fredrick crushed the tiny photo of SS Lieutenant Müller, picked up the framed picture of her parents and their happy children and hurled it against the wall. Splintered wood and shattered glass flew into the air. He turned around and walked out of the apartment. "I was too late, too late," he said to no one. ■

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ALVIN G. WINESTOCK

Departing on my command
We crossed the river
To secure our promised destiny.

But as riveted as I was
Upon our forward flow,
I could not resist
A final backward look
Toward the reluctant teacher
Who had brought us to this cusp
Of nationhood
And who now remained
To watch us
As we separated ourselves
From his authentic presence.

It was then
I saw in his eyes
The burden of prophecy
Through which his final moments
Would be given over
To the people,
And his certain knowledge
That this fledgling nation
Finally selfward bound,
Would be destined to know
Again and again,
As he knew now
In these last moments
Of his remembering the future,
The torment of exile
And the keening for home.

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The Immortal Samovar

SHELLY SANDERS

My days and nights spill together like the tea I boiled, all those years ago, where my story begins, thousands of miles from here, in a tiny Ukrainian shtetl called Kupil. Legend has it that Kupil means "mud" in Hebrew, and our shtetl received this name because all the mud in the world lies beneath the feet of its people. Others say Kupil means "dome". I say the truth is never simple and it doesn't always set you free.

On a cool, rainy morning, I am emptied, polished until I glitter, and wrapped in linen. A sense of doom comes over me as I sit in the dark silence. I am afraid of being out of a job. I can't do anything except boil water for tea, though I am exceptionally good at this task. I was created in 1827 and, at the risk of sounding vain, am the most exquisite of the samovar tribe, with my intricate silver coat and hefty bulk. The more we weigh, the more valuable we are!

When the tossing and turning begins, I fear my life will soon be over. My entire existence, I've sat proudly in the centre of the table, coal running through my body, from bottom to top, boiling water that steams through my chimney. Not knowing if this hurling will end, or if I'll ever boil water again, tarnishes my insides.

> *I can't do anything except boil water for tea, though I am exceptionally good at this task.*

Something is different. The spinning has stopped. I am unwrapped and placed on a ledge, over a crackling fire that roasts my base. I see a round table and chairs, different than what we had before. The whole room is different, with the stove, sink and a window along the wall facing me. Thank goodness my people are the same. Viktor, with his kind eyes that crinkle at the edges when he's happy, and his wife, Golda, always rim-rod straight and elegant, even in a cotton housedress. Their son, Natan, with dark hair and whiskers. Vera, Natan's tired, pale wife, and their three girls, the youngest, a baby with lungs of steel. We are all together again, but I am not where I belong, on the table. It unsettles me, but I know it is only a matter of time before I will be in my proper spot, because they can't live without having a sit by the samovar.

I am bored to rust. All I do is watch my people come and go like gusts of wind. Except Golda. She coughs and blows her nose while she reads poetry in front of the fire, her blue shawl wrapped tight around her neck. Even worse, she has replaced me with some cheap-looking imposter that sits on the stove until steam trickles from its measly spout. She pours water from the phony samovar into a white container with little pink flowers on its body, as if it doesn't know whether it's a garden or a pot.

Golda is ill. She speaks in a croaky voice and can barely lift her head. Avraham davens in the corner, chanting Hebrew that comforts me with its praise for God. The little girls huddle around Vera as she cradles the whimpering baby to her chest. Natan disappears for hours at a time, returning when the sun is long gone, hair pasted to his head with sweat, cheeks gaunt. When Viktor finishes praying, his hooded brown eyes converge on Golda's scarlet face, damp with fever. I wish someone would look at me that way.

In the evening, when the house hums with sleep, the two men sit at the table and discuss Golda in hushed tones.

"She is getting worse," Viktor says. "And the doctor won't come. He thinks she is contagious."

"Find another doctor."

"You think it's so easy? I've been turned down by five already."

"I can help," Natan offers.

"No. You need to work or your children will go hungry. I will try again tomorrow."

I hear Golda cough in her sleep and have no idea her poor condition will soon change my world forever.

A tall man with fair hair and inky blue eyes enters the house. The doctor. As he presses a stethoscope against Golda's chest, Viktor hovers nearby, tugging his whiskers as if he wants to yank them out. The doctor tells Golda to open her mouth. With a small light, he peers down her throat and sighs.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

Happy Pesach
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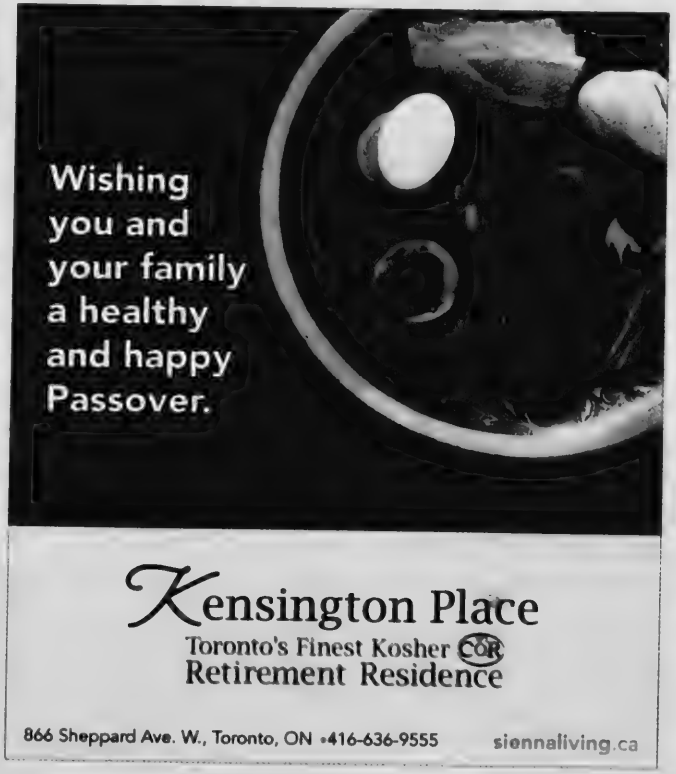
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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

"Diphtheria," the doctor says in a language that sounds like Yiddish but isn't.

Golda understands. She cries out in a feeble voice. Viktor understands. He groans and clutches his head with his hands.

The doctor rummages around in his bag and pulls out a vial and a long needle. He pokes the tip of the needle into the vial.

"You can make her better?" Viktor asks.

"This antitoxin should help." The doctor gently rolls up Golda's sleeve, taps her skin and sticks the needle into her arm. "Keep her away from the children. Diphtheria is especially dangerous for people under 14 years." He plucks the needle from her skin and rubs the spot with a cotton ball. "I'll be back tomorrow."

"Thank you," Viktor says.

The doctor closes his bag and hurries out the door.

I try to catch Viktor's eye with my dazzling shine, to remind him I'm here, ready to comfort him with my delectable tea, but he fills the inferior pot with water and sets it on a coil that turns red as mist pours from the spout. The nerve. I want to burst with steam but I'm empty.

It's been 14 nights since the doctor's first visit and the house has gone from being calm and quiet to complete pandemonium. I can't hear myself tarnish in this uproar. Viktor pinches the baby's cheeks, making her squeal in a piercing tone that would take the shine off any samovar. The little girls are racing around shrieking as if they're being chased, which they're not. And Golda is sitting up and smiling at all the commotion, her mink-brown hair in a stylish bun, the way it looked in the old house.

Something is wrong. Viktor and Natan are home before the sun is down. And they are wearing black suits they only put on when someone dies or gets married. Golda is in a high-collared black dress that hangs past her knees, and Vera looks pretty in a long skirt with a ruffled, ivory blouse. The little girls are twirling in their matching flowered dresses, to see who can get the higher spin. Even the baby looks freshly washed, her silky hair combed neatly over her big head. I am not impressed; the last time they all looked so nice, I was wrapped in linen and ended up here.

Viktor picks me up by my handles. His hands shake. Probably because his mouth is watering at the thought of my tea compared to the sludge he's been drinking. I

brace myself for a linen shroud, but he carries me out the door, with the rest of his family behind us, like a parade. My body is excited at leading the way but my smokestack is terrified of the unknown. We march down the street where wagons without horses grumble and people walk quickly, their eyes on the ground. Plumes of smoke from the wagons clog my vent. I have a bad feeling about this excursion.

We turn at a corner and proceed to a large brick house with a white door and, before I have time to imagine potential disasters, the doctor appears and ushers us inside. There is the scent of baked apples and cinnamon and the sound of children talking and laughing. Here we go again with the noise.

"This is an unexpected pleasure." The doctor's eyes slip from Viktor to Golda. "Good to see you out and about."

"Thanks to you, doctor."

Viktor clears his throat and is about to speak when a woman's voice bursts into the air.

"Paul, who's there?" A woman with freckles across her nose and round cheeks emerges from the back of the house.

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The doctor introduces all of us as the Gurevich family and says the woman is his wife, Clara.

"Lovely to meet you," Clara says.

"I treated Golda," Dr. Paul explains to Clara.

"That's why we're here." Viktor thrusts me forward, to Dr. Paul. "Please, take this samovar as a symbol of my gratitude."

What?

"My goodness," Clara exclaims.

Dr. Paul's eyes water. "It's too much."

Obviously.

"You saved Golda's life. I can never repay you, the only doctor who entered our house under quarantine and saved our precious Golda. I have no money and do not want to be indebted to you. Our samovar is the most valuable thing we own. I always pay what I owe."

"Seeing Golda get well is payment enough," Doctor Paul says.

"It's far too expensive," Clara says.

Listen to Clara. She sounds highly intelligent.

"We brought this samovar from Kupil," Viktor says, ignoring Clara. "It was used for making tea. Perhaps it would look good on your mantle, yes?"

No!

Dr. Paul clears his throat and looks Viktor in the eye. "I am honoured to accept this samovar," he says, sealing my fate in seven words.

They shake hands and, just like that, Dr. Paul takes me from the only people I've ever known. Then, Viktor leaves without showing Dr. Paul where to put the coal, or how to fill me with water. I'm going to end up stashed away in some cupboard where I'll corrode in the darkness.

Clara brushes her soft fingers against my chimney. "Shall we put it on the credenza?"

"I was hoping you would want it there," Dr. Paul says.

What's a credenza?

Dr. Paul grabs my handle and follows Clara into another room with an oval table that gleams with polish, beneath the biggest cluster of lights I've ever seen, enough to light 10 houses, but what do I know.

Clara plucks white candles, silver candlesticks, and some kind of figurine, off the top of a long cabinet, and stuffs them inside a door on the bottom.

Doctor Paul sets me down on the space she cleared. He and Clara link arms and look at me the way Viktor gazes at Golda.

Maybe this won't be so bad after all.

In the evening, Clara lights candles on the table. Dr. Paul points at me and tells his two sons how Viktor sacrificed his most valuable possession to show appreciation and retain his dignity.

"This samovar reminds me that a truly generous person gives a lot or a little, without being asked," he says.

I gleam as the light from above shines on my silver coat. Dr. Paul's words make me feel important for the first time since the day I was bound in linen. I recall Viktor telling Natan, after we arrived in this new world, If you can't do what you like, you must like what you do, when Natan complained about working as a peddler, and am ashamed for complaining so much. From now on, I will try to like being a garnish on a credenza.

Clara sits down and says it's time for the table prayer. They all bow their heads and Dr. Paul asks Lord Jesus to be their guest and bless them and their food.

Who is Lord Jesus?

Dr. Paul's older boy lifts his head, reaches for the glazed carrots, and says that the samovar will remind him to give generously, without being asked, and that he wants it in his house one day. That's when the truth hits me like a flood of boiling water: it doesn't matter whether or not I know about Lord Jesus, or that they don't pray in Hebrew or use me to boil water. I am now a symbol of eternal generosity, which is far better than making tea, something any old imposter can do. But who am I to boast. ■

I Am a Jew

BILL GLIED

The following poem was written by the late Bill Glied, who died Feb.17, 2018. Bill was a Holocaust survivor dedicated to Holocaust education. He recited this poem to the students of March of the Living in front of the mausoleum at Majdanek, and it now continues to be recited by MOTL participants prior to their departure from Majdanek.

I am a Jew,
because I believe that all human beings
are created *b'tselem Elohim*, in the image of God,
and therefore, racism and discrimination are foreign to me.

I am a Jew,
because as a Jew I have the God-given right to question everything,
and therefore, I am responsible for every one of my actions.

I am a Jew,
because for three thousand years
we Jews dared to be different.

I am a Jew,
because I believe it is our lifelong task
to seek knowledge, to search, to enquire, to educate.

I am a Jew,
because every morning I recite in my daily prayers
that it is not a choice but a duty, an obligation,
to *gmilat chasadim*, to give charity,
hachnasat orchim, to be hospitable to the stranger,
bikur cholim, to visit the sick,
halvayot hamet, comfort the mourner – and most of all
ahavat shalom ben adam l'chavero, to create peace.

I am a Jew,
because you and I and all Jews are my people and,
through all the trials and tribulations, we have kept
our dignity, our humanity, our hope for a better future.

I am a Jew,
because I want to continue the heritage that my parents,
and six million Jews, gave their lives for;
and when I stand here, before this mausoleum,
these ashes are my family,
the family that made you and me into a people,
into the nation that we are.

Stand up and join me in a short prayer.
The prayer which is our declaration of faith as Jews.
The first prayer a Jewish child learns,
and the last prayer a Jew says nearing his death.
The prayer that 60,000 men, women and children
must have said before their tragic death, here, in Majdanek:

"*Shema Israel, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai echad.*"

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from Richmond Hill Council

Mayor and Members of Council 2018-2022

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VAUGHAN

Mayor Maurizio Bevilacqua and Members of Council extend their best wishes for a healthy and happy Passover!

2018-22 City of Vaughan Members of Council

First row, left to right:

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Jewish Community Organizations, Synagogues and Schools join our brothers and sisters in Israel in celebrating a Happy and Kosher Pesach.
We pray for peace with security and honour.

HAPPY PASSOVER

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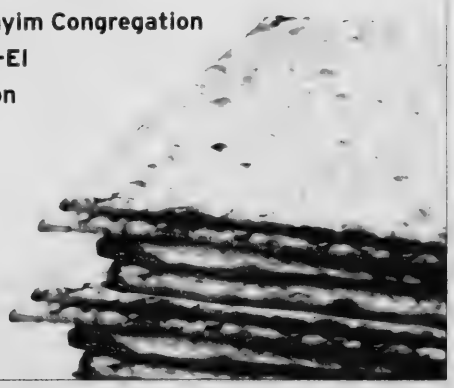

After Pesach

FIONA GOLD KROLL

At our house, everything happens after Pesach. Sadly, in the spring of 1950, my grandmother Sheva passes away at the end of April. By that time, my grandparents are living with us and I love it. Sheva is too weak to lift me, and when I run into her bedroom each morning, she pats the bed, encouraging me to climb up. I tuck myself into her and hold one trembling hand while she grasps a packet of chocolate cookies from her night table, and I watch excitedly as she slowly removes one and hands it to me.

Everything changes after Sheva dies. Mom tries to hide her tears, but her swollen eyes tell us how much she misses her mother. I miss watching grandma tasting the gefilte fish broth on a Friday morning, nodding her head in approval as Mom drops the delicate balls into the simmering liquid.

Within a few weeks, Grandpa Moshe returns to work running his sheet metal business in the East End of London. And after my father leaves for work each weekday and my older brother walks to school, the emptiness and silence in the house are palpable.

One day, Grandpa arrives home early from work and slumps down in the overstuffed leather armchair in the living room. He unties his laces, and when he slips off his heavy boots, they hit the floor with a clunk; his brown eyes fix on the crackling embers burning in the fireplace, his face ashen.

"What's wrong, Dad?"

"I just came from the doctor," he says in his Yiddish accent.

Mom's eyebrows bunch. "What did he say?"

"I have a heart condition. It's not good."

Mom hugs and comforts Moshe.

"Stay here with Grandpa," Mom says to me, and goes to the kitchen. Within a few minutes, she returns, holding two sugar cubes and a glass mug filled with steaming hot tea that fits in a silver holder with a handle. I am still too young to understand what Grandpa's illness means, but I sense his fear. That night I hear my parents whispering after dinner. Mom wants Grandpa to enjoy whatever time he has left, and she decides to speak with his doctor and ask him to call Grandpa and tell him that his heart condition isn't as bad as he first thought.

> *I am still too young to understand what Grandpa's illness means, but I sense his fear.*

The following day, Grandpa walks up the front path, whistling a tune, and unlocks the door.

"You sound happy, Dad," Mom calls out.

"I spoke with the doctor today, and he told me my heart condition isn't as serious as he first thought."

"Well, that's good news!" says Mom as she lifts a casserole out from the oven.

"Come, Mameleh," he says to me, holding open his arms.

I run to Grandpa, who scoops me up and kisses my cheek before putting me down and taking my hand. "Come, let's wash for dinner."

Later that summer, Grandpa takes a vacation at a kosher hotel in Bournemouth on the south coast of England. A dapper man, Moshe wears a three-piece suit and a straw hat during summer, even when it is hot outside.

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He sends us postcards and, to Mom's relief, seems to be enjoying himself.

But the peace in our house is short-lived. When Grandpa arrives home, he tells mom he has met a widow, and they are going to be married. He says he is lonely without Grandma.

Mom is furious. "Dad, it's barely four months since Mom died," she yells. "Please don't do this before her yahrzeit!"

A tense discussion follows until grandpa finally capitulates.

"We'll wait," he sighs.

The following spring, after Pesach and Grandma Sheva's yahrzeit, Grandpa marries and moves to an apartment with his new wife. I miss him, but we visit every Saturday. Just before Shabbat goes out, I climb on a chair and hold the glowing braided candle, Grandpa's hand wrapped securely around mine, while he *bentsches* Havdalah.

When Grandpa moves out of our house, he takes all of Grandma Sheva's things except her brass candlesticks and Pesach dishes. There is nothing special about the dishes, mainly English china, remnants of sets long gone. Nothing matches and perhaps some of the plates are chipped. But each year, when we unpack and wash them, I feel closer to Sheva.

Grandpa Moshe enjoys another six years of life before he passes away. A pious man, who built a successful business without compromising his faith, leaves me with a void in my heart that I never forget.

> *When Grandpa arrives home, he tells mom he has met a widow*

And Grandma's dishes? Every year after Pesach, I help Mom wrap each piece in newspaper and pack them away in boxes until next Passover. Mom uses them for several more years, and when the Seder table is set, I place the matzah cover and afikoman bag on the table covered with a freshly pressed white linen cloth. I imagine the family seated around, with Grandpa Moshe sitting at the head of the table in a comfortable chair with a cushion to lean on. He pours wine into the silver Kiddush Cup before he reads from his large haggadah; Grandma Sheva sits beside him, tired but content as she looks around at her family, the glowing candles on the table reflecting in her blue eyes. ■

SHUTTERSTOCK PHOTO

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Ashkenazic Poutine

JENNY ROGER

Max quickly rolled out the small meatballs in his hands. All were the same size, all perfectly rounded. At the young age of 15, Max had close to 10 years' experience working in a kitchen under the tutelage of his grandmother Sadie.

Max's parents worked long hours running a small store. Sadie lived with them and looked after Max when they were away at the shop. Sadie also looked after the house and cooked for the family.

With a careful eye on budget, Sadie stuck to her traditional Ashkenazic roots and cooked the humble foods of her ancestors. Cholent for Shabbat, chicken soups made with old birds, organ meats and cheaper cuts of beef all filled out her *fleishig*, her meat menu. She made chopped liver and kugels and baked special cakes for the holidays. Every Shabbat, a challah fresh from the oven graced the table.

Soups, whether made from beets or filled with barley and beans, nourished and filled them up. Her blintzes were light as air and her rugelach were addictive.

Max helped her make all of it. He learned how to take flour, eggs and oil to create the most tender dough for kreplach. Max loved cooking so much he often gave up playing with his friends to spend time in the kitchen with Bubs, as he called her.

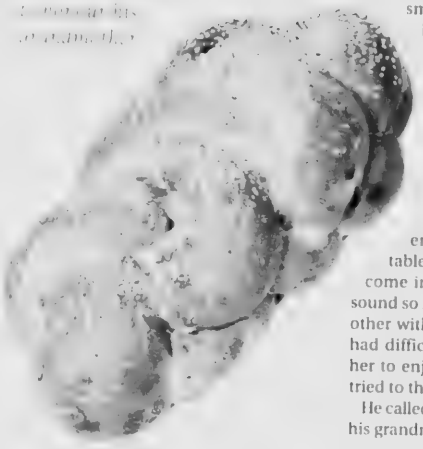
After graduating high school, Max went to culinary school, where – not surprisingly – he excelled.

He took his time and worked in top restaurants throughout Europe to gain knowledge and experience.

Finally, at the age of 27, he was ready to open up his own restaurant near where Bubs lived in a retirement home.

He wanted to cook an updated version of the food of his childhood. Lighter, and with modern ingredients added. Luckily the trend for eating "nose to tail" was in full swing. Nose-to-tail eating meant the whole animal would be used, nothing wasted or thrown out, which respected the whole animal and reduced waste.

Max knew the Jewish cooking he grew up with used many organs and parts of the body considered inferior, and of course no pigs are allowed. Within these parameters, he set out to create a menu.



His parents had scrimped and saved hard and invested in real estate. They were able to retire in comfort, allowing them the pleasure of financing Max's restaurant with whatever he required.

Max wanted to open a comfortable, small neighbourhood restaurant. His parents owned a strip plaza on a long street where the Jewish community always stuck by, a few blocks from where Bubs lived. The plaza was the ideal location; the restaurant had seating for 50 people.

Grateful for the help from his parents, Max spared no expense: he bought the best kitchen equipment and comfortable tables and seats. He had an engineer come in to develop a system to baffle sound so his customers could talk to each other without yelling. He knew his Bubs had difficulties hearing, and he wanted her to enjoy eating at his restaurant. He tried to think of everything.

He called the restaurant Bubs, to honour his grandmother.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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Max knew that to please young customers, he would need plant-based foods on the menu, including a vegetarian matzah ball soup that he loaded with vegetables and spices.

There were two beloved family brisket recipes, one with cola and one with packaged onion soup mix. He decided to serve the brisket two ways, the cola recipe in sliders and the onion soup method in a traditional heart-attack-on-a-plate meal.

His coleslaw was a thing of beauty, made with organic heritage vegetables and locally produced cider vinegar.

And his chopped liver elevated the humble dish to the height of elegance, with carefully caramelized onions and fine balsamic vinegar added to the mix. Every table received a basket filled with the softest challah and the freshest bagel crisps.

Max's favourite dish was chicken fricassee, a classic Ashkenazic dish with its origins born out of poverty. Chickens are relatively inexpensive, but as Bubs told Max, they were very expensive before the Second World War. Bubs's mother's recipe used only chicken giblets, hearts, kidneys, livers and feet of the chicken. It was rounded out with small meatballs made from inexpensive minced meat.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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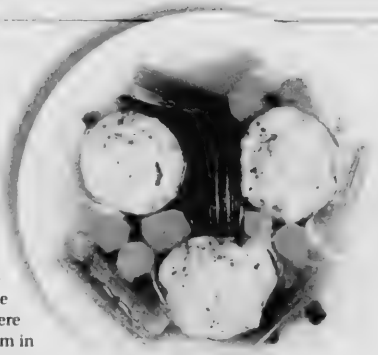

Today, chicken wings are often found in fricassee.

With chicken wings a serious trend, Max set out to update the fricassee. He made the stew base with lots of sweet paprika, chicken necks and small pieces – whatever he could get hold of – and added the small meatballs. He then baked the wings until they were nice and crispy and slathered them in spicy ketchup with a hint of the sweetness often found in the food Bubs loved. The fricassee was served on a large lacy potato latke. Max called the dish "Ashkenazic poutine".

People lined up hours for to buy the poutine.

Then came the call to the restaurant. Bubs was nominated for Best New Restaurant in a prestigious magazine.

Max couldn't wait to share the news with Bubs, and went straight to see her.

Bubs's health was failing, and she needed a wheelchair to get around, but her mind was as sharp as ever.

"I knew you had it in you, Maxele" she said softly as he held her hand.

At the ceremony, Chef Max stood in front of an audience of peers in an elegant ballroom and received his award. He stood at the podium, his hands grasping the trophy while he searched the room looking for Bubs, and deep emotions washed over him like waves at the beach.

"I know it is almost a cliché for a chef to say he was inspired to become a chef while learning to cook from his mother or grandmother. But that's what happened. It was my grandmother, Bubs, who not only taught me how to cook but how to work hard and be a mensch, a decent human being. I still see myself as a child making the small meatballs for the chicken fricassee, Bubs at my side, watching over me. Today, these meatballs have been turned into Ashkenazic poutine. Bubs is here tonight, with my parents, my family."

He continued, "Scientifically, there is no proof that putting 'love' into food makes it taste better, but love encourages you to cook better and be a better person. At Bubs, we've figured out how to modernize our food, but remain connected to our roots at the same time. Thank you for honouring my work. This award is dedicated to my Bubs."

Max received a standing ovation.

The lineups at Bubs continued and Max started a new project, working on modernizing the potato kugel. ■

Leaves from Paradise

BRANDON MARLON

With their power, tradition holds,
Elijah the prophet cancelled
the poverty of Rabbah bar Avuha.

I would hand one to you, ma'am,
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making a mockery of your prognosis.

Another would I offer you, sir,
and soothe your sorrows,
the aching loss of ones loved.

Friend, you'd take this from me
to erase resentments
corroding for decades.

One I'd reserve for you, dear,
effacing, then replacing fears
with calming peace of mind.

Last but not least, just for fun, I'd give one
to the Angel of Death, who'd surely savour
a sublime whiff of bliss.

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Dinner at the Bagel

RACHEL PIUTI

It was eight o'clock on Thursday evening when Jake called.

"Mom, I won't be home for dinner tonight. I've been delayed, so don't wait for me. We have to finish the scenery and props for opening night on Saturday and we're behind with the work. I've already had my dinner – and wait till I tell you what happened! It was the most amazing experience."

I pushed a pillow behind my back and made myself comfortable on the sofa. Jake's adventures were always interesting, and I was ready to listen.

"There were four of us working on the props at the Toronto Dance Theatre," Jake began. "We got hungry around five o'clock and started thinking about where we could eat for cheap. One of the boys suggested The Bagel, a restaurant at College and Spadina, and that's where we went.

"As we entered, a cloud of smoky air hit us in the face. The place was crowded and there was a low buzzing noise. People were talking in subdued tones and it seemed that everybody was smoking cigarettes. A waitress with a scowling expression on her face asked, 'How many are you?'

"'Four,' we said. I had to laugh. I mean, wasn't it plain to see?

"She led us to a corner table with a grey Formica top and gleaming chrome legs. The chair frames matched the table legs and the seats were covered in matching grey vinyl. 'Hilda will be here soon to take your orders,' she said curtly, and turned her back on us as she walked away."

PIXABAY PHOTO

Jake continued his story, and I could hear the amusement and pleasure in his voice.

"A few minutes later, a chubby, smiling, middle-aged waitress, with orange hair teased sky-high, came over with four menus under her arm. 'Here you are, darlings!' she sang. 'You can look at these if you want, but if you ask me, your best bet is the schnitzel dinner. It comes with a bowl of barley soup and the schnitzel comes with kasha and our homemade coleslaw. You are all young and you look to me like you all need a hearty meal. You can't go wrong with it.'

"We looked at each other, a bit amused, and took her advice. Mom, I was the only one who knew what kasha was.

"Soon four schnitzel dinners filled the table. She was right – the meal was tasty and hearty, even though it was a bit too salty. There was so much food we could barely finish eating it. The smiling waitress kept hovering around our table and from time to time she would come closer. 'How is the schnitzel? Do you like it? Finish it! Don't leave any kasha! It is healthy. It is good for you.'

"Mom, it almost felt like I was at home."

"It sounds like you had a good dinner and a lovely time," I replied. "When do you think you will be home?"

"I'm not sure, maybe around 11, but wait till you hear what happened next. We were paying our bill at the cash register when suddenly we heard a commotion. Someone was struggling to push a cart through the door.

"The cart was full of black and green plastic garbage bags tied with ropes and string. I've seen this bag lady before. I even talked to her once. Her name is Haika. She is a case. She survived the war in Russia. She's afraid of bureaucracy and won't get help. She walks the streets downtown, winter and summer, dressed in rags, right out of Hans Christian Anderson or the Brothers Grimm. Her face is beaten by the sun and years of neglect. The buzzing and talk at the front of the restaurant died down.

"Hilda left us at the till. We watched her. She filled a paper bag with a bagel sandwich, some food containers from under the deli counter and plastic cutlery, very deliberate, like this was a routine. She walked to the door and gave it to the bag lady, who shuffled out dragging her cart after her. You know, you have to wonder what's in all those bags. Hilda walked right back to us and smiled as if nothing had happened, and we paid our bill. When we left we saw the bag lady in the lane by the restaurant, sitting on a wooden crate, eating her meal." ■

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The Jewish Mother

NEILIA SHERMAN

My mother
had a tough life
worked hard to keep
the family together
food on the table.

My mother
so articulate, so knowledgeable
everyone turns to her for answers
she could have been a doctor, a lawyer

Instead, she put her life force into us.

Now, I, her daughter
call her with each new step,
each achievement.
I hear the pride in her voice,
but also, the envy.

"I am the smart one, the talented one,
the counsellor, the healer, the writer –
The Mother."

Don't you know, mother,
that our lives are intertwined
with a bond so tight,
at times it's overwhelming,
so sweet, so sure, so invincible
that we know each other's joy and pain?

My successes are also yours,
my accomplishments grew
from seeds that you planted.
For as sure as life itself
I would not, could not, be who I am
without the protection, the care, the
inspiration
the Life
I received from you.

You live inside of me
as I hope to live inside of my child.
The beauty of life is in the precious gifts
that each mother passes on to her children.

Commentary

KENNETH SHERMAN

It would have been good
to sit at a table discussing
commentary with the rebbe,
but when I was a boy
that world had been forfeited
for a bright new Malibu.
Those were years of great
expectations, happiness just
around the corner. You could
hear its promise in the purr
of the air conditioner,
in the bright hum of traffic,
though we knew in our hearts
that the good life
didn't annul death
didn't answer those questions
that are older than parchment.

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A Love that Never Fades

CARYN NASH

It is almost five years since he left us. They say it gets better. They are wrong. It doesn't get better; it gets different. The raw piercing pain that enveloped my entire being has been replaced with a constant ache that follows me everywhere and all the time. I miss him when I wake. I miss him when I sleep. I follow highlights of his short life through the milestones of his beautiful children.

There still remains, however, a void – a void that I try to infuse with a love that will at no time disappear. Mostly it is through an intricately linked gold chain that hangs around my neck that helps me to fill up the holes.

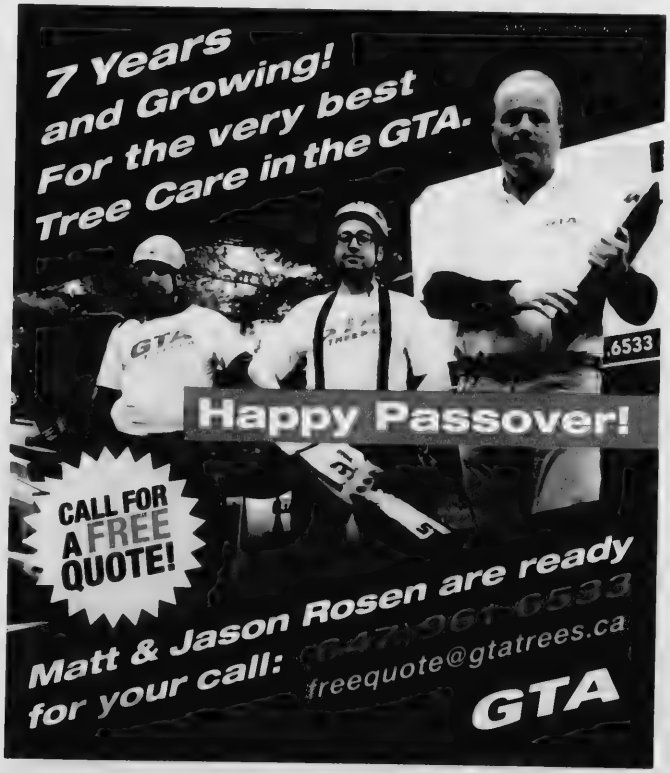
This particular chain was my gift to my son on the occasion of his bar mitzvah. I remember that day well, despite all the years that have elapsed. He opened up the package and lifted the chain into his hands. He eyed it auspiciously as he manipulated it in his hands. He then asked me if I could put it around his neck. As I neared him, I remember inhaling his muskiness, a scent that belonged only to him. I then placed the chain around his neck and, as I did, I felt the warmth of his body contrasting the coldness of the metal. He gazed at it in the mirror and told me he loved it. He thanked me profusely and told me he would never take it off. And he didn't – until the day he passed.

> *I miss him when I wake. I miss him when I sleep.*

He often told me that of all of his belongings, it was this chain that was the one thing he most cherished. So after he left us, I was not surprised that he left this chain to me. Upon its receipt, I held it in my hands, and manipulated it like he did all those years ago. I broke down as I held the chain close to my heart. I asked my husband to fasten it around my neck. I looked at myself in the mirror and copious tears began to flow from my eyes. This chain has been around my neck since that day and, as it was for my son, I have never taken it off. It has become a part of me, as it had been a part of him. I caress it gently every morning after I wake up and kiss it good night as I lay down to sleep. I'm privileged to wear his memory on my body.

This chain has become the conduit that binds us together in death as he did in life. Although his body is gone, I sense a feeling of peace emanating from his soul in the world of the divine, feelings he did not experience in this world. I know he has freed himself of the shackles that bound him and I'm grateful to ha-Shem for making this happen. I thank Him for loving him in a special way only He can. But love him I do, in my own way, with a love that never fades.

Keep flourishing, my son. Get to be whom and where you need to be. With ha-Shem's help, transcend all and fly free. ■



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The Peddler

SHEILA C. FRANSCHMAN

Starting his day before garbage trucks descended on prime residential streets, the junkman went in search of discarded items. Hoping to find undiscovered treasures, he roamed areas thought to provide quality scrap or anything useful. Once home, he sifted through the possessions he found earlier as his wife went about her daily chores, ignoring her husband's attraction to junk.

Saturday was a busy day at the market, as shoppers moved among the myriad vendors' stalls in Kensington intent on securing a bargain. While trucks delivered produce on roads clogged with jaywalkers and pushcarts, the junkman's goal was a cluster of homes east of the market. As he leisurely proceeded, he rang an old brass bell to alert customers of his arrival and halted where he found interest.

As the peddler continued east of Spadina, he entered an extensive area with narrow two-storey frame houses dependant on one another to maintain their awkward balance. From the tiny patch of earth out front, dandelions multiplied without restraint and grass submitted to bare earth and weeds. Rusted wrought iron railings enclosed tiny verandas where a chrome kitchen chair was set out in warm weather. Railings painted in bright colours peeled and only rust survived the countless hot summers. Between tiny patches of earth, the neglected properties catered to multiple families and infants' wails were as common as the overall air of poverty. Feral cats dined on mice that scurried between decaying garbage in laneways. As families saved enough money, they migrated north, ushering in a new wave of immigrants. Settling in neighbourhoods vacated by Jews and other minorities, immigrants combed over piles of flawed furnishings and inferior bedding for items they could otherwise not afford.

Following the usual route, the worn-out horse plodded unhurriedly along. Knocking on familiar doors to collect money, the peddler stood on the tiny porch as ethnic aromas wafted through open doors. As the buyer fished out bills from frayed purses, the peddler accepted payment for previous goods before another object was added, guaranteeing a further visit. From

CITY OF TORONTO ARCHIVES, JOHN BOYD, JULY 25, 1956, FONDS 1266, ITEM 8243

his perch atop the wagon, the wizened peddler watched the world orbit under his observant eyes aware his livelihood depended on it.

Weekends saw customers north of St. Clair Avenue purchase live chickens not found at their local Power or IGA supermarkets. Many industrious vendors became rich as they laboured long hours and woke early to replenish their supplies from stockyards and produce markets. Women walked carelessly across roads carrying string bags they filled before leaving the market. During slow times, vendors sat on upturned crates watching the passing parade.

Kosher shops sold freshly killed poultry while English butchers sold pigs' heads and hocks along with unadvertised horse meat. One independent shop did a brisk business selling cheese from around the world and offered samples. At the local bakery, assorted onion buns, bagels and bialys were tossed into straw baskets and delicacies such as custard tarts and crescents filled with whipped cream attracted anyone with a taste for calories and at day's end, everything was sold.

Live chickens came under shoppers' scrutiny and once a selection was made, the butcher would take the hapless bird from its wire enclosure to the wooden block and sever its head.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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After a blowtorch burned the feathers off, its two scaly feet were packaged with the bird that 10 minutes earlier was scratching the bottom of a cage. After wiping his bloodstained hands on his apron, the butcher attended his next customer.

Old stores melded with the new, squeezed between restaurants and produce shops. An assortment of women's undergarments ranging from small to extra-large hung from clothespins attached to awnings.

Many women removed their outer jackets to try on a brassiere over their sweater and stared at their reflection in the hanging mirror waiting for the vendor to agree or disagree with what he saw. Playtex girdles of heavy rubber latex with breathing holes became popular and were purchased a size smaller as women surrendered their comfort to appear thin.

Chinese and Vietnamese restaurants offered good food at low prices. One popular Chinese restaurant, known only by the number "five" on its door, was located in a narrow laneway behind a hotel. Although it was unadvertised, people in the know returned for the thick orange sauce covering sweet and sour chicken balls. Straight back chairs sat at tables covered in plain paper and overhead Chinese lanterns hung from one Chinese New Year until the next. Delicatessens catered to Jewish garment workers who filled the narrow deli at lunch for a corned beef or smoked meat sandwich and kosher dill from a brine-filled barrel. Further north, Grossman's Tavern hosted jazz bands on weekends and special occasions. In the darkness of its unappealing interior, jazz could be heard drifting from the open window in summer, as dancers took to the platform stage where romance and good times shared a spotlight.

The junkman did not stop to eat, even though there were plenty of shops to tempt him. Towards noon, he would open the paper bag and take out leftovers from the previous night. On good days he ate cold chicken livers, a knish or a chicken leg enclosed in wax paper or any hard cheese with a big slice of challah.

Following his usual route, the peddler paused to allow the horse to drink from a trough, greenish bronze with age. Summers proved hard on horses overburdened by junk and lack of sympathy. Rivulets of sweat pooled beneath their harnesses and coated their scrawny bodies with sweat as many peddlers turned a blind eye to their distress.

At the intersection of Clinton and College, onlookers were surprised to find a disoriented man beside his upturned wagon still hitched to the terrified horse in the gutter. The city was notified as onlookers watched the flailing animal try to gather strength to do more than rear its head.

A woman carries a hen in Kensington Market on July 15, 1926. CITY OF TORONTO ARCHIVES

Firemen arrived to assess the situation. They first unhooked the harness and yoke from the wretched animal and handed it to the confused peddler. The overturned wagon and goods were strewn across the road and traffic was halted. Fixing his gaze on the remains of his defunct business, the dazed junkman looked on in apprehension as his horse lifted its head one last time before being hoisted up by heavy straps and taken away before traffic was allowed to proceed.

As time passed, the peddler slept later than usual and his horse was now irrelevant. The junkman tried his best but failed to understand how he and the animal both grew old and weary.

Months later, a large cartage truck pulled into the laneway and stopped at the garage and two men got out. They unlocked the garage door and guided the horse from his windowless prison into the cartage truck while the peddler watched from the kitchen window and did nothing, realizing it was the end of an era. ■

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The Alarm Clock

RONALD H. LEVY

There was an almost imperceptible click as the radio alarm clock lit up, an eerie shade of blue, and the radio turned on. It was set to 5:59 a.m. every day of the week, and today was no different.

After the news headlines, they were up, he to go to the kitchen to grind fresh coffee beans and make two cups of café latte, and her to shower and start getting ready for her day.

Today, she was off on a trip, women only, to a part of the world which was not as peaceful as theirs.

"Boarded," she texted him. He smiled, thought of the red tassel with the *hamsa* dangling from her phone that he had bought her before the trip as a good luck charm, and started to count the number of sleeps before she returned to him.

The previous evening, the night when she had left, he was careful not to disturb his wife's side of the bed. He would peel away the sheets that had been carefully tucked in that morning and slide in. If the bed remained as she had made it before leaving, she will return to find it in that state.

He leaned over to grab his phone. There it was. Her WhatsApp message. "Good morning Handsome," it read. His sanity and sense of self was restored. "Good morning Beautiful," he replied.

••

There was an almost imperceptible click as the radio alarm clock lit up, an eerie shade of blue, and the radio turned on.

"Good morning," he heard. "We have terrible news from the Middle East. A rocket attack was launched from Gaza and a hotel in Tel Aviv was hit. We are receiving reports of heavy casualties. We do not have any more information at the moment."

His head cleared quickly. Casualties – Tel Aviv – hotel!

He rose quickly, from the partially disturbed bed, looking for her itinerary. Was she in Tel Aviv? No, she was in the south. He started to relax, still disquieted by the news and what it would portend for the region.

He turned on the television, nothing new was broadcast and he started to think about what he had on that morning. He was expected at court and made his way there. He awaited the arrival of the judge when he realized that he had not received the customary morning message from his wife. The clerk announced the arrival of the judge and reminded everyone to close their telephones.

It was only at 11 a.m., after his case was heard, that he was able to open his phone looking for news. He fully expected to find her WhatsApp message with an explanation as to why it was late. But as his screen opened there were messages from clients, but nothing from her.

He went to the *Times of Israel* site hoping for some update.

"56 DEAD, COUNTLESS MISSING," screamed the headline.

A boutique hotel on the beach of Tel Aviv had been hit directly by not one, but three missiles, and had been totally destroyed.

Wait, he told himself. His wife was not in Tel Aviv, and as totally devastating the news was, his wife was fine and just unable to communicate, for obvious reasons.

He headed for his car to return to the office. Suddenly, his phone rang, which startled him.

"Hello?" an authoritative voice asked.

"Yes," he replied.

"Who is this?" the voice asked.

"Well," he replied, "You tell me first who you are – you are calling me."

"Of course," the voice replied, "I apologize. This is Chaim Ben Akiva, I work with ZAKA."

His knees began to buckle at the mention of the Israeli emergency response team. "I know what ZAKA does. Why are you calling me?"

"Well," the voice continued, "I am at the site of a terrible incident in Tel Aviv at a hotel looking for victims of this missile attack. I found this phone with a red string and a *hamsa* and called the number indicated 'in case of emergency'."

"That is my wife's phone – where is she? Is she OK?"

"So far, we have only found this phone. As soon as we have more information we will let you know. So far" – he seemed to like that turn of phrase – "we have not found everyone, but we will continue to look, don't you worry."

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His head swirled and he sat down on the floor where he was. Once recovered, he left for his home. He knew that she was not supposed to be in Tel Aviv. His hyperactive mind started to look for explanations as to how her phone was in Tel Aviv while she was elsewhere. He called his children and explained what he knew.

Eight hours later his phone rang again. It was his wife.

"Hello Beautiful, I was so worried – are you OK?"

"Mister, this is Chaim Ben Akiva, from ZAKA. I am sorry, this is not your wife. I am calling as I promised to tell you that we have not been able to find your wife. Can we ask you to please go to the Israeli consulate and bring her toothbrush and hairbrush? It will be of help to our work."

He woke up in the hospital and his daughters explained to him that they had found him unconscious on the floor of the kitchen clutching his phone. They went on to explain that they had no news of their mother and were now convinced of the worst.

Over the next days, the reality of the situation started to sink in and he was discharged.

He returned to his now-empty home and went up to the bedroom. He looked at his wife's undisturbed side of the bed

and sighed.

According to Jewish tradition, if there is the possibility that she survived and there were no witnesses to her actual fate, it was up to the family to decide when to start the religious mourning.

••

The tour leader asked the women to gather in the breakfast room, as she had something important to share. They had received unsettling news from their army escort that an imminent attack was expected in the south and that it had been decided that all tourists needed to be evacuated north to Tel Aviv.

The women's questions flowed like water over Niagara Falls.

The tour leader held up her hands to try and stop the flow and patiently explained that hotel space had been arranged on the beach in the north of Tel Aviv. Beyond that, she had no answers and she urged the women to quickly return to their rooms and pack.

They arrived, without incident, at the beach hotel in Tel Aviv. It was around 8 p.m. when they heard the sirens. The air defence system, they were told, was so sophisticated that alarms would only go off in the actual areas where a missile strike was expected to land. This sound unnerved the group and they asked the man behind the reception desk what they should do. "Ladies," he said with a smile. "There is nothing to worry about. They do not have the ability to hit Tel Aviv. You are perfectly safe here."

It was at that precise moment that the three missiles hit.

His wife woke up and tried to make sense of her surroundings. She felt her forehead and her hand came away with a sticky liquid that she understood was blood. Was it hers? She now heard voices through the fog of her slowly clearing mind. "Over here," she called. She was placed in an ambulance and taken to the hospital. The scene there was otherworldly. As she looked around, she came to the conclusion that others required the attention of the hospital staff more than her. She got up to leave.

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She wandered away from the hospital and a young woman stopped her. "Are you OK, Madame? You look like you are bleeding. Were you in that missile attack?"

She looked at the young woman and replied, "I do not know what happened to me."

"What is your name?"

She understood the question but her mind would not reveal one.

"I can't remember," she replied with an embarrassed smile.

"Don't worry about that for now. Come with me; I will take care of you." At the young woman's apartment, she said, "This is where you can sleep. Here, I will make us some tea and then you can rest."

The woman's memory remained locked in her head and the young woman decided to simply let things be.

••

After several weeks, the government declared the recovery effort over. The cry from his children and friends started to reach a crescendo. "She is not coming back. We must start the shivah." The delay was increasing the suffering in his children and so, as reluctantly as one turns away from a beautiful sunset, he agreed to commence mourning for his wife.

The nightmare that he was enveloped in persisted through the funeral and the full seven days of the shivah. When the door finally closed on the last shivah visitor, the echo almost deafened him.

He wandered around the house and found himself in her closet. Breathing in deeply, as if meditating, he closed his eyes and was with her again. Her scent was everywhere and he lay down on the floor, closed his eyes and started to cry. He fell asleep there and woke the next morning to the sound of the alarm clock announcing that it was 5:59 a.m.

Once again, he searched for the comfort of her scent. He went to her car in the garage, as that enclosed place would still contain her essence. Her keys were always in the area below the radio. He closed the door to her car and sat there in the dark. Taking deep breaths, he found her again. He had never become familiar with her car and how it worked. "Press the start button once for power and twice to start it," she had instructed. It had all seemed strange and counter-intuitive to him. He never quite got it and often turned the car on when only trying to turn on the power. He felt the need to listen to some classical music and pushed the start button. His smile widened as he thought of holding his wife's hand as they walked along the beach in Thailand. As the concerto reached its crescendo he slipped into a deep sleep, one from which he would not wake.

••

Each day, the young woman would take her new friend for a walk. One morning, on their daily walk, they passed the Canadian Embassy with its proud red maple leaf flag fluttering in the breeze. The woman stopped and looked at the flag in an unusual way. "Is that flag familiar to you?" the young woman said.

"I think so", the woman replied.

Seizing this sign, the young woman entered the embassy with the woman. "I found this woman wandering around the streets several weeks ago. She totally lost her memory and she seemed to recognize your flag. Please help us."

Surprisingly, the Canadian ambassador appeared, took the woman's hand and said, "It's OK, you're home now." The ambassador quickly explained that the woman was a Canadian whom, it was thought, had perished in the missile attack.

The woman was repatriated to her family, in whose embrace she regained her memory.

••

There was an almost imperceptible click as the radio alarm clock lit up, an eerie shade of blue, and the radio turned on. It was set to 5:59 a.m. every day of the week, and today was no different.

The woman slowly opened her eyes to face the new day. She carefully leaned over the still made side of the bed that her husband used to sleep in, and turned off the alarm. ■

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Martyrs or Maniacs?

ARYEH CALLAN

I listened to the voice of our leader,
And agreed with his vision,
that to destroy the enemy was our only mission.
Our precious land we needed to defend,
And we believed that the harassment of our people needed to end.
We were the defenders of the land,
And we would not capitulate,
No matter how strong the enemy was,
We would protect the Jewish State!
Nobody could stop us from safeguarding our religion,
Not even the Pharisees,
Who thought we needed their permission.
You see,
While we were fighting, and martyring ourselves,
They sat in their study halls cleaning books and dusting shelves.
Where were they on the battlefield!
They were nowhere to be found,
If they would have put in just one ounce of effort,
Maybe our kingdom would still be around.
Who did they think they were? We were the ones risking our lives,
But they remained arrogant while we sharpened our knives.
When the enemy laid thousands of our people to rest,
Those hellish beings prayed and cried for
the restoration of their precious nest.
And as their self-righteous leader cowardly played dead,
We fought with endless fury to keep our people fed.
No, we are the heroes, the Jewish martyrs,
And we'd die for our cause,
Even sacrifice our sons and daughters!
If that is not enough to convince you of our piety,
Then you are no better than them,
So caught up in your own chivalry!
How arrogant of you to say I'm full of hate,
While the Sadducees would be happy to offer
my head on a silver plate!
They viewed us as maniacs,
But we viewed them as fools,
And the Sadducees all this time sought to
pervert our rabbinical rules.
They called themselves Jews,
But I called them abominations.
They may have retained some Jewish culture,
But they didn't really value our nation.
But now they are gone,
And the Pharisees were exiled to Babylon,
And we lay lifeless on this sand-covered mountain,
Still wondering what we did wrong.

Model of the Second Temple in Jerusalem PIXABAY PHOTO

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The Druid of Skeleton Lake

AARON ROTH

The hull of Ted's canoe scrapes against sand as we push off. Then silence, as we glide over the still water, leaving camp behind us. In the hours before sunrise, far earlier than I've ever woken here, clouds of mist roam the surface of Skeleton Lake.

At the bow of the canoe, I plunge my paddle into the water and pull. We lurch forward. I lift from the water noisily, sending a spray behind me. I turn and smile at Ted, sitting behind me, but the brim of his frayed baseball cap is pointed out into the mist, his attention elsewhere.

Ted coughs, clearing his throat in a distinctly old-man way – wet and loud, full of mucus. I know Ted was young once, a camper like me, but can't quite imagine it. Ted has always been somewhere in his 60s or 70s, always been a retiree who spends his summers canoeing with Jewish kids, always been clearing his throat. He's a camp staple and an endless mine of source material: jokes, stories, parodies. A piece of Ted is still trapped at Woodstock, in a fog of LSD, or, even better, wrapped between the legs of a hippie girl he still dreamt about. Ted is the perfect punchline to lines like:

"Did you hear who Rachel Berkowitz hooked up with last night?"

"Breaking news: Native Skeleton Lake mushrooms discovered to have regenerative properties; Ted unsurprised – had known this for years."

"Unearthed time capsule reveals torrid love affair between Ted and singer-songwriter Leonard Cohen: Camp accepts in show of unexpected tolerance, ignoring outcry from rabbinical assembly."

I was surprised when Ted offered to take me canoeing by myself, but figured there had to be a possible payoff. "When did you start coming to camp?" I ask, starting to tease out morsels of material. Once the sun rises, I'll have to go to prayers. Hopefully by then I'll have a good story to tell. Maybe I'll have a passable grumbling Ted impression, talking just a little too slowly and drawing out my *sh* sounds a little too long.

"When I was 12. Took a few summers off here and there, though."

"What was camp like in the '60s?"

"Oh, you wouldn't believe it." Ted sounds like he's smiling. "I was too young to appreciate it."

"Appreciate what?"

"Well." He falls silent and thinks for a few moments. We've canoed past the farthest point of camp's docks. "You know, I think that was reflex.... Most of what people did blurs together. It's inconsequential. What stands out is what stays the same." My lord, here we go. "Did you know they changed the cabin numbers around 20 years ago? Cabin One became Cabin 12. Twelve became Five. Five became 18. It was quite confusing." Of course I know that. Everyone knows that. "The numbers changed, but everything was still the same. Do you see what I mean, David?"

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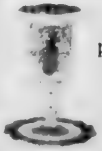

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HAPPY PASSOVER

Ted is the king of nonsense. As our canoe moves farther into the open water, toward the centre of the lake, I keep facing forward, paddling lightly, and pretend to contemplate his profound wisdom. Ah, yes… the numbers have changed but the cabins have not changed…

"Can I ask you a personal question?" I say, looking over my shoulder. I can no longer make out camp's details in the distance.

"Sure."

"Why do you keep coming back?" There must be a secret, a lifelong oath or maybe a long-lost lover. Something must tie him to our incorrectly numbered cabins.

Ted stares at me, beady eyes unblinking, for a moment. Then he breaks into a dry laugh.

"I'll answer you. But first, can we make a stop on the lake?"

"Yeah, sure," I reply reflexively.

"Terrific. Here, turn around, you'll need this."

Ted pulls his hand from the breast pocket of his old-man flannel. He's holding a lacquered wood Swiss Army knife. He pries open the blade with a fingernail and leans forward, offering it hilt-first.

"For what?"

"Take it," he says.

It comes to me – the first rule of improv: never say no. Always play along. "Thank you," I say, echoing his seriousness. I rest my paddle across the canoe's gunnels and take the knife. The hilt is worn smooth from years of exposure, but the blade looks sharp.

"Who do I have to kill?"

Again, Ted's dry laugh. He continues to soundlessly paddle us forward. He clearly doesn't know the first rule of improv. "I'm taking you to treat with the Spirits of the Lake."

The Spirits of the Lake! Of course! I'm fighting back laughter. We'll probably sing a song, maybe Ted has a peace pipe hidden in one of those pockets. Drugs are strictly forbidden at camp, but maybe Ted is an exception.

"David," he says, and I compose myself before looking back at him. "Can you carve a *shin* into your paddle?"

"Like the letter?" *Shin* is a letter in Hebrew. Years of Jewish day school might not have taught me much, but at least I know my letters – not that they will ever prove useful.

"Mmhmm."

"Absolutely," I say. Always play along. I try to dig the point of the knife into my paddle's flat blade but cannot gain purchase. The wood is slick and the knife slips with each toss of the canoe. I press the paddle into my thighs and feel the cold through my sweatpants. Finally, the wood's grain splits, guiding the knife down its groove. Ted can't see me struggle, thankfully; I've never been good with tools. I'm eventually able to connect three downward scores with a fourth across the bottom. Perhaps I am damaging camp property, but only under Ted's explicit instructions.

I lift the paddle and Ted nods at my handiwork. He stows the knife back into his pocket. "Shall we?" I ask. Ted indicates forward with a lift of his head.

I plunge my paddle back into the water to lurch us forward again, but it slips in without disturbance, like a perfect Olympic dive. I pull it backward. The water almost feels like it's thinner, lighter somehow. "I'm surprised you've listened to me so easily," Ted says, but I'm only quarter-listening. No, the water isn't thinner, it's moving in synchronization with my paddle. Ted continues, "I'm not sure… I suppose I expected for you to question me."

I look back at Ted. He's just steering, dragging his paddle behind the canoe, which doesn't trail a wake or disturb the water at all. In fact, the lake itself is perfectly smooth. I stop paddling and lean over the canoe's edge. The lake reflects a midnight blue, unblemished mirror of myself. I stroke my paddle through my reflection without disturbing it.

The mist on the lake has gotten thicker. We're passing through a cloud of it, and I can barely see ten feet away.

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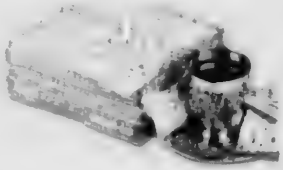

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"*Shin*... I'm not sure why the lake respects shin. Maybe it's short for *sheket*." Ted draws out the *sh*. This is a word I know. It means "quiet", and I used to get it a lot from teachers. Ted continues, "That's always made sense to me. Only those who value silence may treat with us. Or perhaps they say, "Come visit us, if you please, but do so quietly... peacefully.'"

The breath of *sh* leaves my lips, then, for some reason, *shlishi*: "third". On the third day God gathered the waters and named them the seas, and vegetation sprouted from the earth. Jewish day school, again, where knowing the details of how the universe is only 6,000 years old is a must. I learned that when I was 13, when I had just become smart enough to figure out that God didn't exist.

"When we treat with the Spirits," Ted says, and I can't help but smile, "we can only communicate in Hebrew."

"Shame!" I laugh, "I almost failed basic Hebrew in Grade 8." I've always been proud of that.

"We're here," Ted says. I silence myself, eager for whatever nonsense might come next.

Our canoe rests in what must be the middle of the lake. The mist surrounds us completely. The shore might be twenty feet in front of me, or the lake could stretch out forever. I can't hear birds, or wind, or the sway of waves. In this pocket all is quiet, *sheket*.

Ted stands, feet wide, in the centre of the canoe and reaches into his pockets. Afraid he'll fall, I turn around in my seat to reach out, but that rocks the canoe. He barely notices; his knees bend with the sways, keeping him stable like a compass point. He fishes out a hand-sized shofar. I consider asking him why in the world he has one, but decide against it. A shofar is a ram's horn that rabbis blow on a few holidays, one being Rosh Hashanah, I think, to symbolize the time something happened to the Jews and then something else happened – I don't know. Shofars sound like tortured animals. They drill into your skull through both ears, bloodying them. Ted braces himself, holding his little shofar in front of his face, and takes a deep breath that puffs his chest. I almost can't believe what I'm seeing. I cringe in expectation, but when he blows into it, there is only a faint drawling sigh, a light wind. My shoulders relax. Ted must not be blowing into the shofar at all. That can't be, however, because his cheeks are taut and turning red and his eyes are popping from their sockets. But there is no sound, just the touch of wind.

Rabbis can blow their shofars for minutes on end, but Ted falters after only a few seconds, spraying spit, and collapsing onto his seat. He coughs loudly, painfully, it seems. "Are you OK? Do you need some water?" I ask. Ted waves his hand, dismissing me.

As he wheezes, the mist churns in a slow circle. It recedes from our canoe, leaving a small, clear pocket that steadily grows. I stare dumbly around us. Our canoe is in the middle of perfectly calm waters rimmed on all sides by a wall of twisting mists. The water is a deep blue, the mists are snow white, like a ring of blizzard, the sky is a faded grey.

"Now," Ted says, before another coughing fit. "They're ready."

As I look around at this clearing in the swirling mists, it occurs to me that this is exactly the kind of place where God might speak to you, where the sky might form into a face of storm clouds. Somehow that thought dislodges the part of me that has been explaining away what my eyes have been seeing. The waters parted for my paddle with the mark of *shin*. The mists coiled inward and the lake grew impossibly smooth, our canoe crossing some kind of barrier, so where we are now isn't the Skeleton Lake I've always known. Ted blew his mute shofar, and like a dog whistle, I couldn't hear it, but something did. The mists have parted to reveal the sky and the lake. Something is ready to 'treat' with Ted.

"Are there really spirits here?" I ask. He nods. I nod too. I actually believe him. "What did you mean when you said we would treat with them?"

"We will greet them, speak to them, and if we are fortunate, they will respond."

"And if we're not?"

"Then we're not."

"Sounds a lot like praying."

Ted laughs a little. "I suppose it does."

"Only Hebrew?" He nods. Peering into the water, I open my mouth and look for the right words. I run over my vocabulary – a handful of basic verbs and some nouns, but only camp ones, like cabin, dining hall and waterfront. I'm trying to recall words in a language I haven't used in years, but can only grasp at useless child-speak. Good, quiet, house, book, where, what, me, you and he and she, although I can't remember which means which. In a camp with religious nuts who study straight from the Torah, kids still in Jewish high schools and travelling Israelis, I'm the least able to express a complete thought, or even construct a sentence.

I close my mouth, trapped by something about myself that I had always believed was my freedom. I have nothing to say. Despite having left camp today with no expectations, I'm disappointed. I pull back from the water, slouching.

"Ted... Why did you invite me?" I ask. "Why am I out here?" I look around, "You've been at camp for God knows how long, treating with spirits. How many people have been here?" I raise my voice, "Is this some kind of secret society that everyone's been keeping from me?" I have nothing to say. I sweep my hand around us. "Is this some kind of joke?"

CONTINUED ON PAGE 42

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 40

"David..." Ted stares at me for a moment before continuing. "I was brought here when I was around your age by a man named Noam Silver. He was one of the first staff at camp. Kind, thoughtful, brilliant. He died... I don't know, a long time ago. He taught me to carve the *shin* and treat with the Spirits. He gave me the whispering shofar. Where he got it, from whom he learned, I still don't know. There's no one to ask. There's no one else, there's no Secret Society of the Lake. Since Noam, it's been me alone."

"Then why am I here?"

"At the beginning of this summer they asked me to bring someone new. Maybe they're bored, although they don't feel boredom. Maybe they don't think I will be coming back for much longer."

"Well," I chuckle weakly, "tell them I'm sorry to disappoint, but you'll have to choose someone else."

"Oh, I'm not so sure." We sit in silence. I stare at my feet. "Last Shabbat morning I saw you sitting by the shore of the lake."

"I was skipping prayers." I can get in serious trouble for admitting that, but say it anyway.

"I figured. You leaned back against a tree, running leaves between your fingers. At first you were looking over your shoulder, but soon you stopped and closed your eyes. You breathed in and the reeds leaned inward. You reached out and the waves lapped at your toes. I realized then that you might have thought you were running from prayers, but you were actually running to the lake. I know, David, because I've been running to the lake too. For most of my life. That's why I invited you here. To show you what you've been running to... so I won't take you back to camp, not yet. You and I are the same. You're of the lake."

I hadn't noticed Ted that morning. I had made away to my spot, a little moss-covered nook of lakeshore on the outskirts of camp. The earth drops for a few feet, so I can sit with my feet dangling just inches off the sand, obscured by a wide tree. I found my spot when I was 12, on accident, walking through the trees. That was before I cared about stories and jokes, about popularity. I hadn't been there in years, but last Shabbat I went by instinct, by a subtle pressure. It's stronger now, drawing me below. I reach out with a shaky hand for the surface of the water.

> *I laugh, feeling lighter, and it carries over the water*

"Go on, they're waiting for you," Ted says.

My fingertips connect. The water is ice-cold on my palm. There is a weight behind the water, pushing back on my hand steadily. I close my eyes and feel the chill working up my arm. I breathe in slowly. They're waiting for me. I breathe out, past my lips and through my fingertips, "Shalom."

Hello... goodbye... peace... all rolled together. The impression flows from me to the water and ripples outward. This is the best I can do, for now. Shalom explores the lake, pulsing into its depths. And I feel them, the Spirits of the Lake. Sentient but slow, potent but reserved, knowledgeable but secretive. Worn smooth by time like the rocks of the lake's shoreline.

The lake seems to hum in approval. Something pushes back against my hand from beneath the waters. A surge, ebbing and flowing. It's old and lethargic and powerful. Rumbling, like sliding stone-on-stone, "*Shalom... Dah-veed... na-eem meh-od.*" The voice reverberates through me. I've brushed against something far beyond my time. And it's accepting me.

I laugh, feeling lighter, and it carries over the water.

Ted smiles at me. "Nicely done," he says. I smile back. We sit in comfortable silence; I breathe deeply.

"Ted?" I ask.

"Yes?"

"What does *na-eem meh-od* mean?"

"Well met."

Well met. It makes me smile. "Well met" to you too, Spirits, until next time. I can see how Ted could keep coming out here, morning after morning, for years. Ted, who until just now had been only distant entertainment, for all this time.

"Ted?"

"Yes?"

"You know that I came out here to make fun of you, right?"

"I suspected."

Am I really that transparent? I had known nothing of Ted, I still know nothing, but he's known everything about me. He's spotted me when I didn't want to be seen, he's read my intentions and seen through them. And after reading me so easily, he decided he saw something in me, something I couldn't admit to myself.

"Ted?" I ask.

"Yes?"

The mist is beginning to thin. Camp's red roofs peek through again. The rising sun paints the sky orange.

"... Thank you."

...

I sit down with my cabinmates for morning prayers. Jonah, smirking, asks me about my morning with Ted. I search for the words. Ted, the Woodstock Warrior, aging hippie, baby boomer floating into twilight. But... Ted, keeper of memories, silent guardian. The Druid of Skeleton Lake. Jonah looks at me expectantly, eager to insult, annoyed by... my hesitation. The congregation begins singing. I know the melody's sounds but not their meaning. Jonah leans closer and whispers, "Well?"

For the first time since I was 13, I open a siddur, a prayer book, and focus on the lake's greeting on my fingertips. I read from the English side and compare it to the cryptic Hebrew I need to unpuzzle. Breathing, "I thank you, living and enduring king, for You have returned within me my soul, my breath of life."■

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Community continuity

Across the country, Jewish organizations are focusing on critical needs. PAGES 12, 26-27

Adjusting to the new reality

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PLUS: Minyan rules. PAGE 16

Breaking the political deadlock

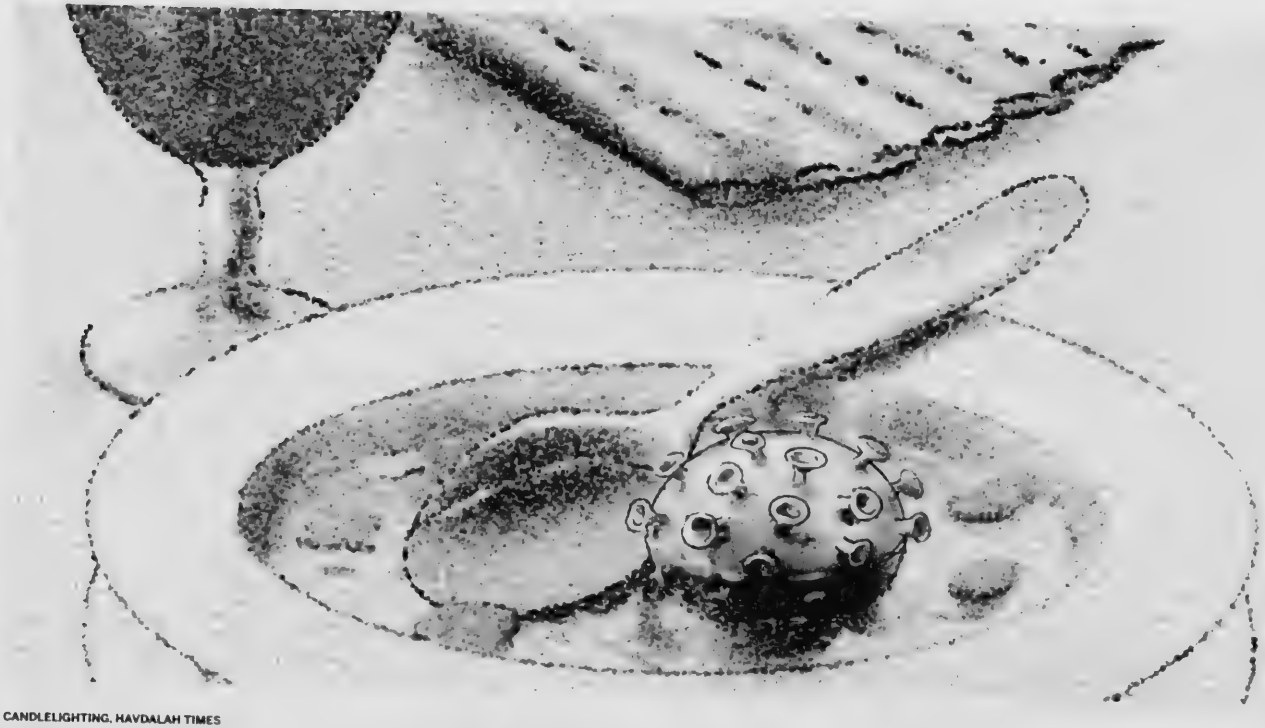
After a year of elections in Israel, a unity government finally emerges. PAGE 28

The ballplayer who wasn't Jewish

Everyone thought Buddy Myer was a member of the Tribe. But was he really? PAGE 46

MAH NISHTANAH?

Preparing for Passover during a pandemic. PAGE 8



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INSIDE: HOW TO TAKE A VIRTUAL TRIP TO ISRAEL.
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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS

CJN

An independent community newspaper serving as a forum for diverse viewpoints
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Quotable

> *Hey, hey, what's going on here?*

— Lin-Manuel Miranda's interjection, typed in Hebrew, to a group of Israeli journalists passing time on Twitter by debating which of his musical scores are best.

Inside today's edition

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Trending

The religious body modifier

They Call Me Dr. Miami is an upcoming film about Michael Salzhauer, the Orthodox Jewish plastic surgeon whose animated antics amidst his tummy tucking, butt lifting, breast augmenting, penis extending and nose jobbing made him a social media star. His ascent fascinated Montreal filmmaker Jean-Simon Chartier, who first met Salzhauer in Florida when making *Corps à la Carte*, a 2018 documentary for Radio-Canada. Dr. Miami's approval from rappers like Snoop Dogg and 2 Chainz, and never missing an opportunity to pose with his pneumatic patients, contrasts with the married father of five trading a scrub cap for a black hat, and donning his tallit and tefillin to pray.

Who took away the kasha

The Dairy Restaurant, a new book by New York illustrator Ben Katchor, explores the heritage of a uniquely Jewish kind of eatery: ones that didn't serve meat, in their way of catering to weekday tastes of kosher immigrants. Its encyclopedic approach begins in the Garden of Eden, explores the eating habits of iconoclasts, and ponders the spiritual meaning of milk. Katchor's affection for one of the few surviving classic dairy restaurants is also personal. He met his wife in 1981, when she sat on the empty stool next to his at B&H Dairy on Second Avenue, and started a curious conversation about his gefilte fish

Dr. Miami CARGO FILM AND RELEASING

COVID-19's alert Jewish teen

Avi Schiffmann, a 17-year-old from the Seattle area, can now boast of being profiled by the *New Yorker*. And all he had to do was start a COVID-19 pandemic-watching website during a family ski vacation on Dec. 29, when there were fewer than 1,000 confirmed cases in mainland China. The self-taught coder created Ncov2019live, which automatically updates every minute. Having researched the coronavirus before most, Schiffmann boasts of stocking up on masks while they were still cheap, and expressed worries well before his physician mother did. "I wish I had listened to him," she says now. ■

Compiled by Marc Weisblott of CJN Today, our email newsletter. CJNews.com/today

Gematria

US$10 million

The amount that Ralph Lauren announced that his foundation will donate to people affected by the coronavirus, including members of the fashion community.

1.7 tons

The amount of gel alcohol, that can be used as hand sanitizer, donated by Miguel Krigsner, the founder and president of Brazilian cosmetics giant O Boticário.

10 million

The number of hydroxychloroquine sulfate tablets that Israel pharmaceutical giant Teva has donated to U.S. hospitals with hope that it can help fight COVID-19.

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Letters to the Editor

Dayenu to the coronavirus

The Passover holiday provides a lesson on how we can try to frame this very difficult and stressful time as we prepare our homes for Passover while trying to be responsible social citizens.

I was planning a seder for about 20 people, some of whom might have travelled from out of town. That will not happen now, and I wish my family who are unable to join us a safe and healthy Passover, though I will certainly miss them.

Nor am I certain at this moment that I will have my usual guests at all. With social distancing and vulnerability as key factors, I have to rethink this year's seder. As long as everyone is well, it will be good enough, though I will certainly miss them.

Even though my mom has been in a nursing home these past five years, she has still managed to join my sister or myself for the seders, but perhaps not this year. She understands that the risk of any exposure to a virus that is particularly deadly for the elderly means this year she may not be here. As long as she is well, it will be good enough, though I will certainly miss her, too.

And if my children decide they don't want their "senior" parents to be exposed to a virus that may or may not present symptoms, that will have to be good enough, as long as they are well.

If it is just my husband and me at the table, and we are well, surely that is good enough for this year.

May next year be a year of renewed health for each person and for everyone in our community.

April Laufer
Toronto

Dershowitz has hit a new low

I agree with Benjamin Shinewald's excellent and eloquent opinion piece on how Irwin Cotler and Alan Dershowitz both previously championed causes of human rights but "at some point, their paths forked and they went their separate ways" ("The diverging careers of Irwin Cotler and Alan Dershowitz," March 12).

I would only add that Dershowitz hit a special low in his spurious argument during U.S. President Donald Trump's impeachment trial before the Senate. He argued, in essence, that Trump could not possibly have abused his power as president when he "requested" Ukraine to announce they would investigate Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden and his son before he would release congressional military assistance earmarked for Ukraine. Why not? Because Trump might have believed that he was doing so for the good of the country.

And then, Dershowitz added that since every president believes what he is doing is for the good of the country, and surely Trump is no exception, then his request to the Ukrainian president could not possibly have been an abuse of power.

Never since *Catch-22* has the meaning of a circular argument been so clearly illustrated. (Not to mention that, in diving into this constitutional arena, Dershowitz was acting outside his specialty of criminal law.)

Richard Levy
Montreal

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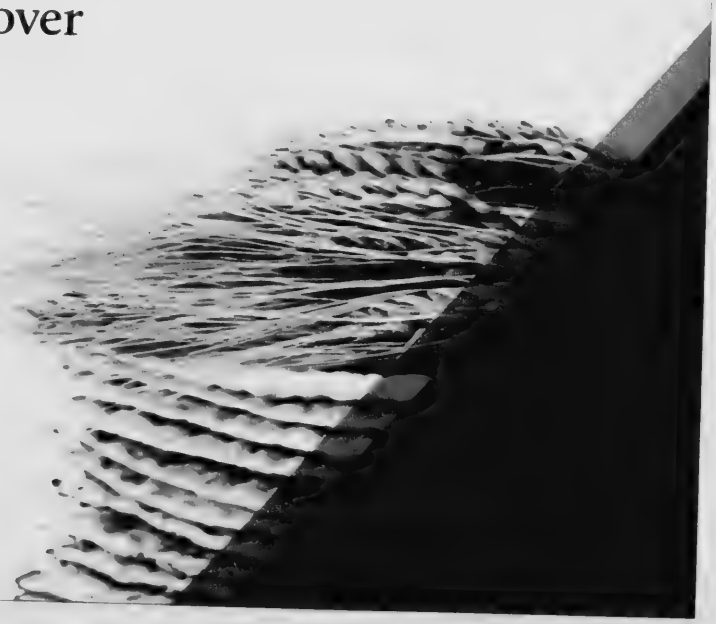

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Rabbi2Rabbi

Embracing our new normal

Many people have changed their behaviour toward others during the current pandemic, including some who have used the situation to step up their acts of kindness, in a possible sign of a careful – but caring – future.

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Rabbi Dolgin: Almost all the customs and forms of our public life have been interrupted as we pull together to blunt the force of a viral outbreak. Our hearts and our gratitude go out to all those on the health services front lines and to those scientists who seek a solution. But as we admire their work and commitment from afar, most of us must stay home. Our battle is at least as much emotional as it is physical.

In *Mesillat Yesharim (The Path of the Just)*, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto wrote that our ability to love is tested in times of trial, stress and emergency. Whether discussing love of one another or of the Eternal, when we are surrounded by fear and worry, love seems harder to realize (we struggle to express it even in the best of times).

While I agree with this teaching, during the current crisis, I have seen acts of caring, kindness and love emerging all around. What can we do to strengthen the good in these difficult days?

Rabbi Cutler: I, too, have turned to *mussar* literature at this trying time to bolster my community and myself. Now is the exact time to develop our attributes of *chesed*, often translated as loving-kindness. The word appears over 240 times in Tanakh.

Psalm 89 teaches, "The world is built with *chesed*." In the Talmud, Rabbi Simlai teaches, "The Torah begins with *chesed* and ends with *chesed*." To get through this crisis, we have to rely on the *chesed* of others.

I have also been drawn to the need for *hakarat ha-tov* (gratitude). From school teachers to kids' home teachers, from cemetery staff to grocery store workers, from my neighbours to the front-line health workers, I have seen tremendous acts of *chesed* for which I have been trying to express my gratitude. I hope that they draw strength from my support so that they can continue to do good.

Rabbi Dolgin: I, too, have seen many kinds of heroes and powerful loving acts.

The strictures of public health at this time have denied the comfort of community to those who are bereaved. At times of utter loss, I have seen families urging their friends to be safe and avoid contact, even though they desperately need the security that comes from connection. I have watched their friends do everything they can to be present for mourners during shivah, by phone and messages, lacking other options. So many have worn their hearts on their sleeves and shared pain and lightened the load of sadness.

One of our most senior members, herself a Holocaust survivor, had been forced to miss davening at shul (when it was still open) due to physical challenges. As our prayers and teachings moved online, some of her temple friends made sure that she felt safe and cared for and could access this new kind of community.

Do you think that we will "return to normal" once this outbreak passes, or might our world be left wounded but more caring?

Rabbi Cutler: If you walk around my neighbourhood, you'll notice drawings of rainbows posted in windows, an initiative of a local parent, shared online, so that when children take walks, they have something to get excited about. Meanwhile, this morning, my older children made their beds for the first time. Why? Because a friend started a "make your bed" challenge online. These may seem like small things, but perhaps they are indicative of something greater.

I like to think that, when this is over, the connections that we have made will continue, that the smiles offered more freely as we pass each other on the street – at a distance! – will remain. I hope that the lessons of social responsibility being preached now will not soon be forgotten. I pray that the interconnectedness demonstrated by a disease that affects all of humanity will remind us that we all have an obligation to each other. ■

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Time to start planning for the future

Scholars debate how long the 10 plagues lasted in Egypt, with estimates ranging from one month or slightly less up to a full year. But however much time the whole thing took, most agree that there were likely intervals during which there was no evidence on the ground of the calamity befalling Egypt. Days, perhaps weeks, went by when the Nile's waters ran clean, the frogs stayed in their homes and the locusts subsided, when physical and psychological despair would not have seemed so imminent. In a time of crisis, the official Egyptian response was to pretend the signs weren't there, to act as if nothing had changed.

Meanwhile, so the story goes, the Jews were planning for the future. They recognized, with the help of strong leadership, that things were indeed changing. Amid the darkness, literal and figurative, they could see the light.

Passover emphasizes change in lasting and literal ways. We change our dishes and what we eat (much to the dismay of our digestive systems, but we do it anyway). Our children, in their marquee performance of the festival, point out the changes spread out before them on the seder table. We even tolerate matzah. And we do these things year after year after year in order to focus our attention on the power of change, for our ancestors in Egypt as well as for us in these times. We do it to remind ourselves to make change part of the routine of Jewish life.

(Even in the Jewish state, where after three elections in a year it seemed to many that things were right back where they started, political change is finally in the air. But amid the deadlock, Israeli officials were clear-sighted enough to recognize the dangers of the coronavirus and enact dramatic social changes to curtail its effects, in many cases weeks before other western countries followed the same path. That kind of forward thinking is saving Jewish lives today.)

By now, I think all of us realize we are living in a time of massive change. Things are moving quickly and all of us are affected. There is little doubt that, whenever we re-emerge from this phase of social distancing and isolation, the world will be a profoundly different place. Our community should begin preparing.

> Now is the time for big ideas, for trying new things and experimenting with what community means for Canadian Jewry.

Now is the time for big ideas, for trying new things and experimenting with what community means for Canadian Jewry. The imperative of online connection is just one obvious example, but it has ramifications far and wide – from synagogues to schools to startups. The financial impact of the pandemic is also affecting Jewish businesses and fund raising, further necessitating the need for a change in thinking and direction. It may be hard to see at the moment, but how we respond now could come to define our community for a generation or more.

The good news is that Canadian Jewish organizations, big and small, are already reacting powerfully to this crisis, lending a hand with food for the needy and loans for those facing uncertain financial futures. Amid the gloom of the last few weeks, it has been inspiring to read *CJN* reports about the many Jewish groups and individuals stepping up to the plate (and there are more in this week's edition), delivering groceries to those who can't pick them up themselves, teaching kids via Zoom, lending support on social media – while they try to sort out their own lives at the same time.

It suggests that our community is well-positioned for the changes in the air. Now we have to put in the work to make it happen. ■ — YONI

From the Archives

Passover seder

ONTARIO JEWISH ARCHIVES, BLANKENSTEIN FAMILY HERITAGE CENTRE, UJA FEDERATION OF GREATER TORONTO

In 1926, children and grandchildren were all in attendance at the Berger family Passover seder hosted by Mr. and Mrs. Myer Berger on Borden Street in Toronto. The OJA now collects and preserves digital photographs. Send high-res photos of your family's 2020 seder to ojainquiries@ujafed.org and help preserve our historic effort to celebrate Passover. Len Berger collection.

SeeJN

Playtime

CHEN LEOPOLD/FLASH90 PHOTO

Children put masks on their stuffed animals as they play indoors on March 29. Restrictions on going outside have become stricter to keep the coronavirus from spreading.

COVID-19

A yahrzeit for my mother in these dark times

Viva Sarah Press

I don't know what colour the grass will be at the unveiling ceremony of my mother's headstone. Before the coronavirus pandemic took hold of the world, the service was meant to take place on a spring day in Toronto, when the grass would have flashed shades of yellow and green.

It was during shivah last May that we planned to hold the unveiling ceremony on April 12, in the 11th month of my mother's death, just shy of the first yahrzeit.

My father, siblings and I (and our families) live in five cities in three countries. We chose this day of *hol ha-moed* Passover, so that all 25 of us could come to celebrate the seders in Toronto and be together for the unveiling service.

There was no way of foreseeing that this COVID-19 epidemic would align with the end of our first year of mourning.

The question for my family in Tel Aviv of whether we should move up our flight in order to be in Canada in time for the unveiling quickly replaced itself with how many of my siblings, who live closer to my father in Toronto, would be able to attend the ceremony – if one could even be held.

Israel was one of the first countries to impose strict isolation rules. Canada and the United States didn't take long to follow suit and shut borders.

We were and are locked out. We are also locked in.

Just writing these sentences seems so bizarre. Especially as during my mother's illness, we all made the trek back and forth to Toronto repeatedly.

Until a few weeks ago, I was to be able to fly out of Tel Aviv on a moment's notice.

And between October 2017, when the diagnosis of multiple system atrophy/Parkinson's plus had been made, and May 2019, when my mother passed away, I flew back on many a moment's notice.

The first time my mother was intubated, I flew on the first flight out. Those 11 hours of not knowing whether I'd be heading to hospital or going to a funeral home were extremely stressful.

The second time my mother was intubated, I was called back to say my goodbyes. Again, I took the first flight out for an 11-hour zero-communication flight.

And in between, the flights that followed each defeat this rare neurodegenerative disorder had over my mother's body, I flew back-and-forth on a moment's notice.

My family in Israel. My family in Canada. A devastating predicament of living far away from your parents: not being here, not being there.

During this year-and-a-half of frequent travel, as the disease transformed my mother into a shell of who she was, not knowing if it was safe to fly back to Israel meant not knowing if I'd get another chance to say goodbye. It had nothing to do with a grounded airline industry or fear of contracting a deadly virus.

It simply meant the doctors and palliative care team couldn't say how much longer my mother had to live. And as such, I often kept an open-ended flight ticket, sometimes deciding to return to Israel only the night before.

I wasn't in Toronto the day my mother passed away. I flew in with my family the next day.

At the funeral, we were all there. Of course, we were. The airline industry was flourishing, and COVID-19 hadn't come into being yet.

The novel coronavirus outbreak, however, has split families. The effects of government shutdowns are innumerable.

On a personal level, this virus has made the physical distance between my family in Israel and my family in North America much more real.

Technology helps keep us in touch. But until most recently, we always knew that flights were available, and we would plan get-togethers.

Just as we planned the unveiling ceremony for April.

There is no stopping time, of course. And the first anniversary of my mother's passing is fast approaching. We cannot change the yahrzeit. Our year of mourning will come to an end, coronavirus or not.

But we have chosen to delay our unveiling ceremony. The headstone in the cemetery, which has been up for some months, will remain covered in a veil until we can all visit together.

There are no halakhic rules for an unveiling ceremony. Rather it is traditional to hold the service within the first year after death so that the mourners can reflect together.

My mother always focused on living meaningfully and aimed toward what can be done.

So, we will wait for the skies to open again. And we will each mark the yahrzeit in our own way.

It may seem out there but amid my swirling thoughts of grief, family and life, the colour of the grass at the cemetery grounds is in my thoughts.

It is the very green, shiny grass that remains etched in my memory on the day we buried my mom in May 2019.

I remember other bits and pieces about that day, of course. But the manicured green grass was shocking.

Having lived in Israel for more than 20 years, and having attended funerals here, I never realized until my mother's burial that the cemetery grounds were even memorable.

There is a reddish-brown dust cover on the ground at Israeli cemeteries. There are also stones everywhere. And when walking to the burial plot, there's never enough room for the foot procession of mourners to stay on the path (if there is a path).

In Canada, the orderly funeral procession was a jolt to my system. There were no stones – mourners need to bring their own, to put on the gravesite. The lush grass at the cemetery surprised me, too.

The grass was so inviting that some of the little kids even played in it. My mother, who loved her garden, would have approved.

I won't be able to pay respects at the gravesite on the first anniversary of my mother's death. But it will be springtime and the earth will be coming to life again with fresh grass and blooming buds. I hope the grass will gleam in shades of yellows and greens.

My mother would have liked that. ■

Viva Sarah Press lives with her family in Tel Aviv. She writes and gives talks about the creativity and innovation taking place in Israel and beyond.

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A seder in the time of COVID-19

Why is this Passover different than all other Passovers?

BARBARA SILVERSTEIN
SPECIAL TO CJN

On Passover the youngest child at the seder table recites *di fir kashes*, the Four Questions. A prayer that begins with "Why is this night different than all other nights?"

But this year, people of all ages are asking: "Why is this Passover different than all other Passovers?

In previous years, people observing the holiday did not have to worry about the coronavirus pandemic. But the virus is having a huge impact on Passover celebrations for 2020.

The seder is typically a large gathering of friends and families. However, this year the Toronto Board of Rabbis (TBR) is urging people to restrict the number of people at their seders to stop the spread of COVID-19.

The advisory from TBR, which is in keeping with the recommendations of Toronto Public Health, is very clear, said Rabbi Michael Dolgin, spiritual leader of Temple Sinai Congregation of Toronto. "People should only share their seder with those people with whom they live."

He said the TBR appreciates the emotional challenge of holding a small seder. "We are all aware that the single most meaningful time in the entire year is the connection to each other at the Pesach seder.

"People are experiencing a sense a loss ... They're going to feel that most keenly on the night of the seder."

The TBR is targeting seniors and urging them to make their health a priority over holiday celebrations with their family, said Rabbi Adam Cutler, senior rabbi of Adath Israel Congregation. "Grandparents have to stay at home because older adults are more vulnerable to the virus."

He is reinforcing the TBR guidelines of social distancing with his congregants and he said he understands their disappointment with the limitations on the seder size.

"We may have to overcome that challenge this year in order to ensure that we can have many Passovers together in years to come."

Seders will be limited in size this year.

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David Moscovitch, a professor of clinical psychology at the University of Waterloo, has had a head start in protecting his parents and in-laws, by undergoing a voluntary period of isolation, with his wife and two sons, aged 10 and 13.

They cut a family trip short and returned to Canada in the second week of March, because someone on their flight to Israel had tested positive for COVID-19.

Moscovitch said they are continuing to maintain a physical distance from his parents and in-laws. "We are doing our part to protect each other from each other."

He pointed out that "social distancing" is an inaccurate term, because physical distance does not mean social isolation. "You can be socially connected but physically distant."

He said his seders usually include extended family members, but this year they are all following the TBR guidelines for small gatherings. "We're doing as much as we can technically and we're finding new ways to be connected."

He said he'll be having two seders. Usually he gets help from his mother and mother-in-law. "Now we all have to make our own seders. It will be a challenge."

Rabbi Cutler acknowledged that within smaller family units many people may be leading seders for the first time. "We want to do our part as a shul to support our members to take ownership of their seders and to make them meaningful and exciting in a new way.

"We should all consider this to be a learning opportunity even if it was forced on us."

That opportunity is "the silver lining," in this year of social distancing, said Rabbi Jarrod Grover, senior rabbi at Beth Tikvah Synagogue. "Passover is something many people leave to their parents, or in-laws, or even commercial Pesach companies. I think it's a wonderful thing that many people are doing Pesach for the first time."

At some point in their lives people will need to know how to conduct a seder. "What better way to learn than to be rushed. It's the cold turkey method of education."

Rabbi Grover said it's not always possible for him and his wife to attend their large family seders in their hometown of Montreal. Some years they have held seders at home alone with their three children, ages nine, seven and four.

"With fewer people around the table we all have to play a role. The kids get a chance to read from their own haggadot."

Rabbi Elie Karfunkel, rabbi of the Forest Hill Jewish Centre, also emphasized some positive aspects of smaller seders. It's a way of strengthening family ties and promoting spirituality, he said.

The focus of a large seder is often on logistics. "This year let's have 95 per cent of our preparations be spiritual."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 27

THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
CJN

In this time of COVID-19, the global plague that connects us all while isolating each of us, The CJN is making every effort, in print and online, to provide information and guidance to the Jewish community.

Our stories reflect the challenges we are experiencing individually, and that our community and our organizations are all facing. We are endeavouring to be a lifeline to the community, with resources to help us all cope.

As we all struggle with the new reality, The CJN is not immune to the economic impact of the coronavirus. We need your help now more than ever. We encourage you to subscribe to, and advertise in, the paper.

The CJN provides a unique platform to enable our institutions to communicate broadly as we continue to report on communal challenges - and offer some diversion from the day's breaking news. Please support us however you are able.

WISHING YOU A HAPPY AND HEALTHY PASSOVER.

from the

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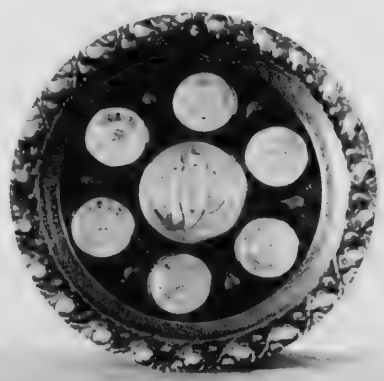

THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
APRIL 2, 2020

What can we learn about ourselves from COVID-19?

Michael Diamond

> "When we look back, let's remember how much we have, and appreciate every bit of the good that we have available to us."

What does one write in the middle of a pandemic? You will read this 10 days after I write it – and 10 days is like a decade right now.

Most of us are frightened due to the unknown, and given that you can get as much hysteria as you need from CNN at no cost, I will focus on silver linings.

Some time from now, after this is over, as we start to recover from the economic and personal carnage, what positives will be out there from which we can learn?

Our political leaders will have hopefully learned that you really do have to pay attention to the possibility of pandemics and other natural disasters. If you look at the damage COVID-19 has done, it becomes clear that material investments must be made in our own security. Some form of "Pandemic Ministry" should exist in every country, investing in the response to the inevitable next Bad Bug, and should be properly funded to do so.

The world's net worth has gone down by trillions of dollars. A small proportion of that amount properly invested would have had a positive impact on the outcome.

On a personal level, consider what you did with your time during the lockdown and any travel related quarantines? How did you use that time? Was it well used? What changes might you make in your daily life based on those learnings?

What did we learn about others in our immediate circle, in our families, our broader circles, our community? Were people good to each other? Were they kind? Did people reach out and care? Evidence to date suggests that has been the case, hopefully that has not changed by the time this article is printed.

What kept working, what did not, and at what personal cost? Did the phones keep working, television and all the feeders to it, reporting, newspapers, heating supplies like natural gas, electricity, police services, and of course, our medical community that even now as I write this on March 23 is stretched and tiring.

What about our much maligned politicians and their advisors. Who do we need to thank? Who has risen to the occasion and should be so recognized? Can we separate our politics from our humanity and do the right thing?

Who stepped up in our own Jewish community to take care of those most vulnerable? Who along with UJA made sure that seniors and Holocaust survivors were fed and cared for? Who, with new donations, kept the lights on in key institutions like the Jewish community centres during this time of zero revenue? Who worked overtime, simply because it was needed?

Let's support and thank our heroes. Some of those who get sick, and even some who die, may have been infected while helping others. Those are some of the heroes I am talking about.

Perhaps, once we are back to normal, we will understand how much we take for granted. That in normal times, we can shake someone's hand without fear, or hug our family and friends, that we can kibbitz with the grandkids without wondering whether they are infecting us, that we can gather anywhere we want to watch theatre or concerts or movies or have a picnic, that we can watch sports in person or on TV, that we can have friends over for dinner, or go out for delicious meals at any one of thousands of some of the best restaurants on the planet, that we can hop on a plane, and visit another place and enjoy another culture, that we can share and help others without fear. And a key point- that whatever our level of wealth, health and our security are the great equalizers.

Life is certainly full of surprises. COVID-19 is one of those nasty life events that we don't expect (but probably should) and which teaches us so much. Let's learn from what we did not do, from what we did right or not, but above all, when we look back, let's remember how much we have, and appreciate every bit of the good that we have available to us. May God and good fortune be with every one of you! ■

Bernie could cement legacy by throwing in the towel

Bernie Sanders GAGE SKIDMORE/WIKIMEDIA PHOTO

David Weinfeld

I had a very different column planned. I was going to write about the possibility of the United States having a Jewish president, either Bernie Sanders or Michael Bloomberg. The contrast was stark. Bloomberg was the charmless plutocrat, with his arrogant slogan, "Mike will get it done." Meanwhile, Bernie was the stalwart progressive, with his humble mantra, "Not me. Us." It now looks like neither of those men will ascend to America's highest office. But with Passover fast approaching, I decided to compare Bernie to another Jewish leader: the biblical Moses.

Moses was the epitome of "Not me. Us." The Bible tells us that "the man Moses was very humble, more so than anyone else on the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3). He had a stutter, so he let his brother do the talking. And despite his pivotal role in the Exodus and the revelation at Mount Sinai, in the traditional Passover haggadah, Moses is mentioned but once, and all credit goes to God.

Moses was a radical in his day. His story anchors the Jewish people's master narrative, from slavery in Egypt to freedom in Israel, but also the crystallization of Judaism as a religion of laws. By comparison, Bernie is not so radical. He calls himself a democratic socialist, but he's really a progressive New Dealer who wants Americans to enjoy the same high-quality, affordable, universal health care I grew up with in Canada - as well as other benefits of a responsible welfare state – strong unions and a commitment to fighting climate change and global inequality.

Bernie's achievements cannot be attributed to him alone. He stands on the shoulders of earlier generations of activists, most recently the leaderless Occupy Wall Street movement. Bernie's campaign was never about Bernie and was always bigger than Bernie. Nonetheless, more than any other individual, he helped move the Democratic party and the American political conversation to the left. His legacy is secure.

And yet, in the last two weeks, some of his actions have run counter to the humility embedded in his slogan. After disappointing losses in the Democratic primaries on March 3, 10 and 17, Sanders could have credibly exited the race and endorsed his rival, the presumptive nominee, Joe Biden. I voted for Bernie in Virginia, and was saddened by the results, but felt like this was the right thing to do.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

> "...he will not be the leader who leads progressive voters in the United States to their promised land

Instead, Bernie pressed on. His campaign continued to send out emails and texts (I received them) telling us to prepare for the New York primary. By not dropping out, Bernie is telling people they should still vote for him, even though he has no realistic chance of winning. While the coronavirus spreads, this strikes me as unconscionable.

What's more, many of Bernie's supporters have also been lacking in humility. Instead of looking inward, noting their candidate's flaws, they have lashed out at the Democratic party, Elizabeth Warren and other external forces.

To be fair, Bernie is handling the coronavirus crisis better than Biden. Bernie is offering policy proposals and fundraising for charities that support those burdened by the disease. Biden, meanwhile, has been mostly invisible and ineffectual.

Still, Bernie could do all the good he is doing now while also conceding the race for the Democratic nomination. He could continue fighting the good fight in the senate. He could have done all this, in fact, starting in 2017. He could have endorsed Warren then and helped her prepare for the 2020 campaign. Or he could have endorsed her after his heart attack in October. That would have been leadership in the spirit of "Not me. Us."

Moses was the Jewish people's greatest leader, but he did not lead them into the Promised Land. That task fell to Joshua. Bernie will not be the leader who leads progressive voters in the United States to their promised land either. Once he realizes that, and publicly affirms it, his legacy will be even greater. ■

Do you disagree with our columnists? Have your say by writing to **cjninfo@gmail.com.**

Four questions for Passover in a pandemic

Washing cups for netilat yadaim (ritual of washing hands) WIKIMEDIA PHOTO

Dan Rosenberg

Why is this Passover different from all other Passovers?

At all other seders, we are supposed to wash our hands twice. In the time of coronavirus, we wash our hands 40 times a day.
(Disclaimer: in years past, I have to admit, we often skipped one of the hand washings during our family seders, but not this year.)

On all other Passovers, the seder plate includes a hard-boiled egg, but on this night, we have to improvise with a chocolate one.
First there was a mad run on toilet paper. Apparently, some families worry this pandemic will last until 2052, and need to stock up accordingly. Then, the supermarket aisle with pasta was cleaned out, and now the eggs are gone, too. So, how are we supposed to complete our seder plate with an item designed to represent both the sacrifice offering from when the Temple in Jerusalem stood and also the hope of a new beginning in the circular cycle of life? The best I could find at a nearby store was a package of chocolate-covered Easter eggs. If the toilet paper hoarders are correct, and this goes on for years, I may have to look up YouTube videos on setting up a backyard chicken coop for future seders (and breakfasts).

Before all other Passovers, we search our homes to remove hametz, but before this Passover, we stock up on all types of non-perishables.
For most Jews, the weeks before Passover are marked by trying to rid the kitchen of bread, cookies and all the crumbs of hametz that can be located. Now, with the dangers of even heading to the supermarket, we are confronted with the reality of trying to stock up on non-perishables that are predominantly not kosher for Passover (that previously mentioned pasta aisle comes to mind). Fortunately, there is another annual ritual to save us: temporarily hiding and selling our hametz to a non-Jewish neighbour. It just happens to be a much larger batch this year.

When I was doing my own pantry inventory, I discovered the ultimate non-perishable: an unopened box of matzah from 2019. The "expiration date" was just a few weeks ago. Do I risk the virus and head back to the store for more "fresh" matzah, or make do with "slightly expired matzah" this Passover? I checked with Rabbi Erin Polansky of Beth Israel Congregation in Kingston, Ont., who reassured me that a sealed, unopened box of last year's matzah is still kosher for Passover.

As matzah is the ultimate non-perishable, I'm going to take my chances with the box, and will soon report on its quality. My guess: for better or worse, it will taste just like regular matzah.

On all other Passovers, we conduct a huge seder with friends and family, but on this night, we will be alone.
This is the heartbreaker. Social distancing will make the seder of 5780 one of the most painful in recent memory. Gone are the two tables full of dinner guests, and their grimaces as I make corny Passover jokes. Is it a seder without grandchildren asking grandparents the real Four Questions? My solution isn't talmudically kosher, but if we can't celebrate together in person, we will conduct the seder via Skype. That way, we can still recount the tale of liberation from slavery in Egypt, and dip our fingers to remember the 10 plagues while we endure a modern-day one. The search for the afikoman could be a challenge, but I'm sure we will find a solution.

And when we say "Next year in Jerusalem," let's hope researchers discover a vaccine, travel bans and social distancing are long gone, and families can again be reunited.

This is an excerpt of the forthcoming *Coronavirus Haggadah.* ■

Dan Rosenberg is a radio producer and presenter whose work is regularly featured on Cafe International, Afropop Worldwide and Toronto's ClassicalFM.

News

Federations focus on communities' critical needs

ALEX ROSE
Assistant Editor (he/him)

The Montreal Jewish community had a bit of a head start in dealing with the novel coronavirus. In February, a group of Grade 9 students were volunteering in Montreal's twin city of Beersheba, Israel. They arrived at their hotel a few days after a group of South Korean students departed. When the latter group returned home to South Korea, nine of the students tested positive for the coronavirus.

That's when Federation CJA in Montreal learned how complicated dealing with COVID-19 could be, said CEO Yair Szlak. It put together an ad hoc committee of doctors and volunteers to deal with issues concerning the virus near the end of February, and from there, "we became acutely aware that this is very quickly moving in the direction ... that we may all be impacted by it," Szlak said.

That's why, by March 3, Federation CJA was already figuring out what the critical needs of its agencies would be – especially those responsible for providing food and social services – and how the organization would function. To respond to the urgent needs of community members, Federation CJA has leveraged a large group of volunteers and its staffers to determine what needs people have, such as lack of food or medications, and to address them in a timely manner.

"The beauty of it is our ability to do what we call our crisis response team, deploying volunteers and federation staff interchangeably to address the variety of needs that are arising," Szlak said. "It's important that we work with our ad hoc COVID-19 committee,... which has doctors who are in the field. They advise us on the protocol for helping these people. So, for example, we don't have any face-to-face interaction, and gloves are used. So we're taking extreme precautions while still being able to address critical needs in the community."

Nir Noam, a volunteer with UJA Federation of Greater Toronto, helps at this year's Passover food drive, expanded to help those in need during the pandemic. LIORA KOGAN, UJA PHOTO

Federations across Canada are working to address the same needs in their communities as Federation CJA. Some longer-term initiatives may be in the works, but for now, the first priority is about making sure vulnerable community members are safe and secure.

"Frankly, we're only two weeks into this.... It seems like a month ago, but it's two weeks," said Joel Lazer, president of the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg. "The biggest item is just to see that nobody's falling through the cracks."

As a smaller Jewish community, Lazer said Winnipeg doesn't have the "critical mass" to always be able to easily hit its financial needs.

"A $50,000 shortfall is a big deal to us. And we don't have a whole lot of room in our budgets, never have. Hopefully the government will recognize this need and we will be included," he said, adding that he thinks the government will recognize that charities are essential. "but they may have gotten forgotten in all the rush to keep everybody going."

If regular food security needs weren't enough of an issue, local federations also need to worry about making sure their communities have access to Passover food. For the Atlantic Jewish Council (AJC), which oversees New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador, making sure everyone in its purview has access to kosher-for-Passover food can be tough even in the best of times.

In Halifax, there's one supermarket that imports food for the holiday, said Naomi Rosenfeld, executive director of the AJC. It's been receiving Passover food in waves, so the AJC is encouraging people to only take what they need and not to hoard. In Fredericton, there's a supermarket that ships individual orders across the region's bus routes.

"We've been encouraging everyone to get their orders in as early as possible, because we don't know if the maritime bus routes are going to keep running. So it's a little bit of uncertainty, but we're hoping for the best right now. We're trying to make do with what we have and make sure it all gets spread out and everyone is able to get some matzah," said Rosenfeld. "I'm pretty confident there will be enough for everyone."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24

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Virus creates havoc with planned simchahs

SHERI SHEFA
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

As Prime Minister Justin Trudeau continues to plead with Canadians to practise social distancing to flatten the COVID-19 pandemic curve, Jewish families are postponing, cancelling or getting creative about their simchahs.

Avivi Kohl, who got married on March 15 in Toronto – just three days after Ontario encouraged non-essential workers to stay home – said she and her husband Michael Kohl considered postponing their wedding "right to the last minute."

"It really wasn't until the week before the wedding when our Israeli guests called to cancel that we realized things would have to be different," Kohl said.

Although the number of confirmed cases in Ontario was still in the low 20s in early March, her 85-person guest list dwindled to about 40, as people began to heed warnings about gathering in large groups.

"On the day of, I think 10 people backed out, including my own sister. She had a cough and was afraid to hurt people. Rightfully so," Kohl said.

Avivi and Michael Kohl made a last minute decision to go ahead with their March 15th wedding. ERIC BENCHIMOL PHOTO

"We had a hug-free wedding for the most part. Lots of elbow bumping and social distancing. We provided hand sanitizers at our bar as well as to every parent of children present. We asked people not to shake hands or kiss during our speeches. We ran interference so no one would touch my grandmother. We sent emails leading up to the day telling people to stay home if they were unwell or had travelled. We told them we wouldn't be mad, but grateful that everyone is safe."

As the number of infected Canadians began to grow exponentially, the pleas from political and medical leaders intensified. In Ontario, as elsewhere, Premier Doug Ford ordered the closure of all non-essential businesses in the province for a minimum of 14 days.

Jewish families who have taken social distancing seriously have been forced to come up with creative and responsible ways of celebrating milestones.

From couples erecting huppahs on their driveways while family, friends and well-wishers look on from a safe distance, to bar and bat mitzvah parties taking place on Zoom, a video communication app, it seems that not even a modern-day plague is enough to keep some Jews from celebrating life.

Others, like Jessica Rosen, have opted to postpone.

Rosen was supposed to get married on March 22, but pushed the wedding back until the summer.

"But with every passing day, a summer wedding is unfortunately looking less likely," she said.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

John Syrtash
B. A. (Hon.), LL.B.

Associate
Garfin Zeidenberg LLP
Family Lawyer & Mediator
for 39 years

Mr. Syrtash is Senior Family Law Associate to Garfin Zeidenberg LLP, celebrating 39 years as a Family Law lawyer this year.

Suite 800, 5255 Yonge Street (at Norton) just north of Mel Lastman Square, Civic Centre Subway station, Toronto, ON M5G 1E6. John Syrtash can be reached at (416) 642-5410, Cell (416) 886-0359.

Answers to pressing questions on Family Law

Family Matters by John Syrtash

Access to Children, Covid-19, and our Underfunded Courts from the 70's

It's Passover and I shouldn't be surprised, but I was. Why? This is a time when social distancing has ironically brought people much closer together. As children we sang *"He's got the whole world in his hands. He's got…"* So even estranged or distanced friends and family members contact each other; children call their parents; the elderly and disabled are being called by those who should have called well before this crisis; and acts of kindness are legend: just in time for Pesach. At the BAYT synagogue in Thornhill Ontario Rabbi Korobkin organized volunteer University students to deliver groceries to shut ins. Many have found spiritual renewal in prayer or prayer in a more devoted fashion. Others show their gratitude through charitable donations. Even the canals of Venice spew fresh water, no longer a sewer.

However, a letter I just received did, in fact, surprise me. A client of mine, the father, is separated and has a small child who lives with his mother. We asked for access which she had denied for some time. But now she's continuing to deny it *solely* because of Covid-19. Unless there is a valid medical reason then no parent, *especially* in these uncertain times, should use the pandemic to deny a child access to his mother or father. As long as the access parent agrees to stay safe then such an excuse to deny access is specious.

So, what to do? The problem is that the Courts are now closed, except for "urgent matters" until at least the end of May 2020. Only exceptionally urgent motions, such as child abduction, will be considered. The courts sometimes treat unfair access denial less seriously as custody claims, child support, or allegations of child abuse or claims for restraining Orders. When this happens, the Court punishes the child since unfair access denial is akin to child abduction and is a form of child abuse.

The real problem is that the Family Courts in Ontario are not properly funded to embrace the technology of 2020, not 1970. Judges could be hearing matters from their homes if video live streaming on the internet, like Zoom, could be accommodated rather than closing down the Court. Yes, our health concerns are currently paramount, and they should be. But when its over we need to quickly bring the Courts up to date. Stevie Wonder: *move over*. Its time for Taylor Swift. And I mean swift.

At Garfin Zeidenberg LLP we would like to wish all our readers a chag Pesach kasher vesame'ach

Visit www.freemychild.com; www.spousalsupport.com; www.garfinzeidenberg.com.

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Sponsored by the Community for Jewish Culture of B'Nai Brith Canada

She said her caterers had drafted a new policy whereby any events in the next 60 days could shift to a mutually-agreed upon date in the next four months. "We simply needed to top-up the deposit to keep them afloat. I was relieved. A few days later, all gatherings of more than 250, and subsequently more than 50 were banned. So we made the right decision."

Since mid-March, event planners and decorators have been working hard to accommodate their clients who have had to postpone or cancel their events.

Julia Germanovsky, creative director at E&B Event Decor, a company that specializes in weddings, bar and bat mitzvahs and corporate events, said she typically does 10 to 12 events a month.

"The current numbers for the upcoming two months are zero. All of the events are postponed for the obvious reasons. [Our clients] understand the seriousness of the situation but they are optimistic that it will be resolved shortly so we can carry on with these simchahs. People will not cancel their wedding or a bar or bat mitzvah. It's a part of our culture and it will not be erased by COVID-19," Germanovsky said.

Susan Fischer Avni, owner of Chuppah.ca and marketing consultant for Perfect Wedding Day, said she's having a similar experience. She's also down from about 10 to 12 events per month to none, as clients are looking for dates after July.

"Couples who have guests coming from oversees are looking at a full-year postponement. I've also had a handful of new bookings for couples who have had to cancel destination weddings," Avni said.

She added that some couples are opting for intimate ceremonies at home and postponing the reception to later this year.

Craig Gruzd, creative director of DT Floral and Décor, said while he and everyone in the industry are struggling to survive, most people are being considerate and trying to find an alternative date late in the year.

"But there are only so many Saturdays or Sundays available so it causes issues for families, [when there are religious] restrictions for when you can have music and can't have music, and conflicting dates with other families."

Gruzd sympathizes with families who have had to postpone.

"We all work hard on planning events. It must be traumatizing for the family. You look so forward to celebrating and then you're being told by the venue or Health Canada you can't have an event," Gruzd said. "It's scary - in one week our world fell apart."

Jessica Rosen and her fiancé Perry Libfeld decided to postpone their March 22 wedding until the summer. TARA MCMULLEN PHOTO

Jessica Rosen said she's taking the postponement of her wedding in stride.

"Ultimately we're going to roll with the punches and see what's in store for us. If a summer wedding can't happen, York Mills Gallery has said they will move it again. But that would be a total bummer. Might have to do one of these driveway weddings like I'm seeing on Facebook because time waits for no man!" ■

From Prime Minister Justin Trudeau & Liberal Members of Parliament
In these challenging times, may Passover bring health & spiritual togetherness with family & community.
De la part du premier ministre Justin Trudeau et des députés libéraux
En ces temps difficiles, puisse Pessah apporte santé et spiritualité à la famille et à la communauté.
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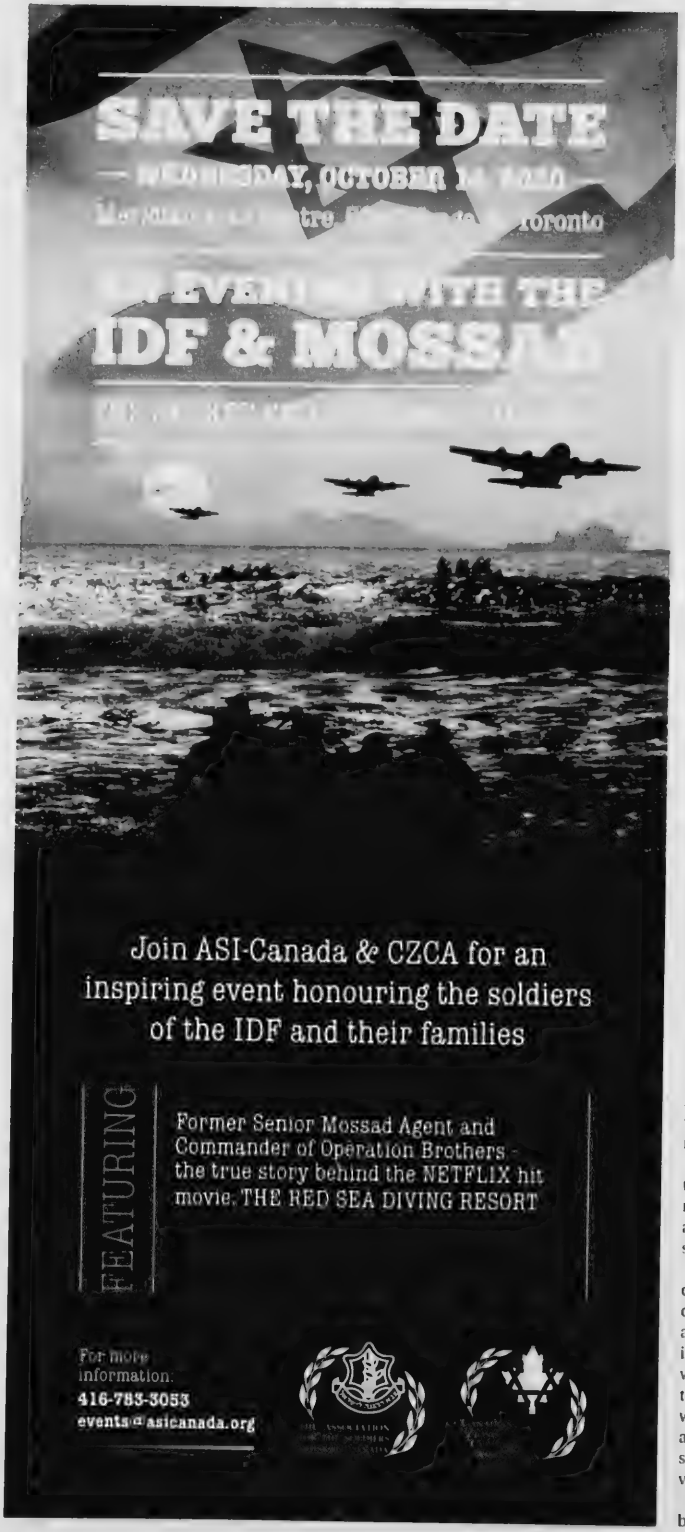
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Guest Voice

Minyanim in the time of the coronavirus

Robert Walker

If I could have peered two weeks into the future back on March 10, I probably would not have believed it. On Purim, the vast majority of synagogues across Canada were holding megillah readings and parties for the festive holiday. COVID-19 was definitely in the headlines, but with fewer than 100 cases in Canada, it was hiding just below the surface.

Within a few days, nearly all synagogues and Jewish day schools across the country were closed, joined by other schools and places of worship coast to coast, in an attempt to slow the rapid growth of COVID-19.

Virtually all synagogues, but not quite all.

As of this writing, there are still a small number of groups which continue to hold minyanim (prayer quorums of 10 men) – contrary to the overwhelming evidence of wide transmission of the virus, and public health pleas to severely limit social gatherings.

Clearly, ceasing communal prayers is not something to be taken lightly. Prayers are a lifeblood of our faith – indeed, according to our sages, the daily *Amidah* prayer replaces the Holy Temple in Jerusalem until it is rebuilt – and yet, *pikuach nefesh*, the saving of a human life, takes precedence over nearly all other circumstances, including praying in a minyan.

And while the overwhelming majority of Orthodox rabbis in Canada have shuttered their synagogues, a tiny minority of minyanim are continuing to flout public health regulations, putting at risk both those who come to pray, and anyone who may come into contact with them.

Despite an apparent attempt at discretion on the part of these small number of minyanim, it seems that their continued activity has nonetheless sparked considerable attention online.

As an Orthodox Jew active in the Jewish community, I have been approached countless times over the last 10 days, and have been asked to explain this incongruent response. How can Jews who believe that our role in the world is to bring God's morals and ethics to the world simultaneously be so irresponsible and cavalier when it comes to halting the spread of a rapidly growing and deadly virus?

While I don't have the answer, I remember a story I was told during my own journey to religious observance more than a decade ago that helps give clarity.

One of the obstacles to my own religious observance was seeing some ostensibly religious Jews engaging in behaviour that I saw as unbecoming of God-fearing people.

A rabbi I was learning with challenged me: "Once," he said, "I saw a religious Jew eating pork on Yom Kippur." I replied in credulously that this person couldn't possibly have been a religious Jew. "Exactly!" he responded.

His point was made: eating pork on Yom Kippur is as "religious" as cheating on taxes. Using this example, this rabbi forced me to reconsider how I define "religious." Clearly, being a "religious" Jew meant following Jewish law as much as possible, and not selectively choosing what was comfortable, and what wasn't. Being a "religious" Jew meant going out of one's comfort zone and doing what may look weird and feel weird, but ultimately is in line with one's values and search for truth. In short, we can never guess what is driving someone's actions, and we can only evaluate our own.

There is more at stake here, of course, than any individual's personal religious observance. Safety from infectious disease in our neighbourhoods and beyond are critical, and is absolutely a matter of life and death. As such, authorities across the Canadian Orthodox community have spoken out vociferously against attending minyanim and organized study groups in person until it is safe to do so. And while tragically there is a tiny fringe of Jews who flout both rabbinic leadership and public health regulations, it is absolutely worth remembering with pride that the overwhelmingly vast majority of synagogues and Jewish organizations across Canada are now operating virtually.

And this is where perspective is critical. While the world is disgusted with thousands of teenagers partying on Florida beaches in contravention of public health guidelines, the Jewish community is appalled by a few dozen fringe individuals. And we should be; because if the Jewish people has a holy mission to perfect the world, then we must start at home, and hold ourselves to the highest standard that we can. ■

Robert Walker is a consultant and activist in the Jewish community

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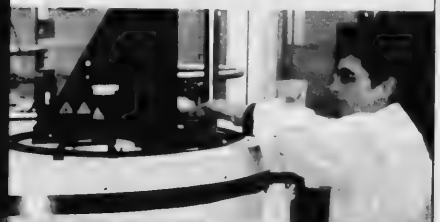

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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
APRIL 2, 2020

Businesses 'decimated' by plunge in patronage

PAUL LUNGEN
plungen@thecjn.com

For Moshe Joseph, the call couldn't have come at a worse time.

It was around 12:20 in the early morning hours of March 24 when the security alarm at his store, Aleph Bet Judaica, went off. Joseph rushed to his shop, located in the heart of Toronto's Jewish shopping district on Bathurst Street, between Lawrence Avenue West and Wilson Avenue, to find that someone had thrown a rock through the glass front door, got into the store and removed $250 from the till.

That wasn't the worst of it. The smashed door had to be fixed, but with an insurance deductible of $1,000, he ended up paying for it himself.

Normally, all that would be painful, though tolerable, but these are nowhere near normal times. Since fears of the coronavirus have reached a fever pitch, people are hunkered down at home, waiting for the all-clear so they can resume their normal lives, and that has meant businesses, particularly small businesses like Joseph's, are suffering, along with the people they employ.

The door of Aleph Bet Judaica was smashed in a robbery on March 24. FACEBOOK

Joseph said business has crashed, dropping 80 per cent from what he could normally expect. And it happened just before Passover, usually his busiest season. One employee decided to leave, afraid to come into contact with other people.

What's more, in anticipation of his usual Passover trade, Joseph stocked up on Passover items, an expense that is not likely to be recouped. He's tried offering home delivery service or curbside pickup, but that has produced only modest results.

So, in the face of all that, Joseph is facing a dilemma that is likely to be repeated across the country.

"I will go bankrupt soon," he said, potentially forced to close the business he started in 1988.

Several Jewish-owned businesses contacted by *The CJN* told a similar story of sales down dramatically, employees laid off, no money coming in, bills still to be paid and a future outlook that is cloudy at best.

Ehud Telem is the president and CEO of Peerless Travel, a travel service company that has seen its business fall off a cliff.

People are not travelling anymore and, in the last few weeks, all trips through May have been cancelled. Twenty per cent of his business was arranging travel to Israel, while the rest was primarily business travel. But hardly anybody is travelling for business now. Europe is closed off and flights to Israel have been stopped, he said.

"My business is practically zero," said Telem. "We're down 97, 98 per cent. If people don't travel, what revenue can we have?"

As a result, staff has been laid off. There's still a skeleton crew keeping the office going, and they are taking bookings, but not until July or August. Even those trips are in doubt, he said.

"Our company is healthy and has reserves to survive a long shutdown. Other companies, I don't know."

The kosher catering industry has seen business drop as well. One caterer who preferred to remain anonymous called the situation, "brutal, just brutal. The entire event industry has stopped, bar mitzvahs, bat mitzvahs have been cancelled or postponed.

"Everything is coming to a halt."

"We've had events cancelled the day before (they were scheduled to take place)," including one for more than 100 people, said the caterer. In that case, the food, which had already been prepared, was donated to a food bank.

With business plummeting, he's had to lay off about 15 employees from his kosher division – everybody but the executive chef.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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A lot of catering companies are hurting, but it's not just them. "I think every business in the hospitality industry is in danger of folding," the caterer said, referencing hotels, restaurants and banquet halls. "There's nothing going on. Zero."

The caterer would like to see more assistance from government and he encourages the public to step up to the plate.

"People should try to support their local businesses so they can survive," he said.

One businessman in the food industry, who also prefers to remain anonymous, said business is down 80 per cent at his kosher restaurant.

It all started about 10 days ago, when "people started to get scared," he said.

At first, he cut back on staffing hours, then on the hours the restaurant stayed open.

The restaurant is still open for business, offering delivery service, but he's now had to lay off a worker and cut other employees' hours in half.

The restaurateur believes "more than a few businesses could go bust. If you were a struggling business, you won't come out of this. If you were a healthy business, you may not come out of this either."

He'd like to see more aggressive government action to help business and he's calling on members of the community to do what they can to support their local businesses, as well.

"If everybody does their part, we'll be OK."

> *We have employees who cried when we laid them off*
>
> **Joe Elmaleh, caterer**

Dr. Ari Gold is an endodontist with two offices in Toronto. At one point, acting on recommendations from the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario to postpone all non-emergency procedures, he closed his offices and laid off staff, eight people in all, along with three associates.

But the closure put him in what he describes as "a pickle."

"I am an endodontist. I treat people in pain," he said.

The night he received the advisory, he didn't sleep at all, torn between the need for social distancing, keeping his staff safe and "the moral obligation" to help people who are suffering from dental issues.

He decided to reopen part-time, with one secretary and one dental assistant, to receive cases. He has all the recommended personal protective equipment, like masks and face shields, and the office screens patients in advance against signs of the virus.

Unlike other small businesses, Gold's clinic, Metro Endodontics, is in no danger of going out of business, but it hasn't been easy on him.

"I'm taking a hit financially. I have rent to pay, service contracts on equipment, bills that have to be paid and no revenue coming in. I'm trying to minimize the damage," he said.

"The general feeling in our little world is that the prudent thing to do is to lay off our staff."

Joe Elmaleh, vice-president of PR Creative Caterers, recalls the incident that signalled to him a change had been brought on by concerns over the coronavirus. It was 1:30 in the afternoon on March 5 when he got the call that an event for 150 people that night was being cancelled.

In the next week, "we were inundated with cancellations for the month of March, April and through to the end of May," including events from 100 people to 2,500 guests.

"Everybody is hurting," Elmaleh said. "I don't want to use the word 'decimated,' but we have been completely and totally decimated in our events."

"Everybody's situation is horrible," he said.

Passover is a busy time for the company, usually with 500 to 600 orders to cater family seders, mock seders and other large events. The company considered all manner of precautions to ensure the safety of clients and staff, but "regrettably, last Thursday we cancelled Passover production," Elmaleh said.

Uncertainty over possible government orders to shut down at the last minute, coupled with concerns for employees, who'd be working in close proximity to each other, led to the decision, Elmaleh said.

As a result, almost "every person has been laid off ... until the end of May," though a skeleton staff remains to produce some items sold in Sobeys.

"It's a very scary world out there," Elmaleh said.

"We have employees who cried when we laid them off. It's very sad. Some people don't know if they'll be able to survive because of these layoffs, the shortage of work. It's very sad." ■

Senator was a pillar of Montreal's Jewish community

RON CSILLAG
Rcsillag@thecjn.ca

Yoine Goldstein, a pillar of Montreal's Jewish community, a respected lawyer and a former Liberal senator, died March 18 in Montreal. He was 85 years old.

"He was a role model for lawyers for well over 50 years," noted his death notice. Goldstein was the only Canadian lawyer to have been elected a fellow of both the American College of Bankruptcy and the American College of Trial Lawyers, it added.

He was an expert in insolvency and restructuring practice, "and as a great litigator, his expertise and prodigious knowledge, skill and appetite for work extended into many other areas."

Goldstein was named to the Senate by former prime minister Paul Martin. He served from August 2005 to May 2009, and introduced and sponsored bills to protect refugees in Canada, to relieve Canadian students from the burden of student loans, to add a human rights element to the Investment Canada Act when a foreign investment is reviewed, and to facilitate the supply of Canadian medications to African and Asian countries at affordable prices.

He co-founded and chaired the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Prevention of Genocide and Other Crimes Against Humanity.

"He was a tremendous person in every way," Martin told *The CJN*. "In the legal community, he was a legend. He was a standout in the Senate. He was one of the great experts in insolvency and he wrote heavily."

Martin said it was Irwin Cotler, Canada's former justice minister and longtime human rights advocate, who recommended Goldstein as a Senate appointee.

In the upper chamber, Goldstein was "incredibly active," added Martin, who was shocked by the news of Goldstein's death when informed by *The CJN*.

With his "huge background in law," Goldstein became special counsel to the Senate's standing committee on banking, trade and commerce, which was "one of the Senate's most important committees.

Born in Montreal in May 1934 to Sam and Batsheva Goldstein, he graduated from the storied Baron Byng High School and earned a bachelors and a law degree, both from McGill University. He earned a doctorate from the Université de Lyon in 1960.

Goldstein occupied some of the top positions in Montreal's Jewish community. He served as president of the Jewish Community Foundation, president of Federation CJA, vice-president of the Jewish National Fund Canada, and was honorary legal counsel to those and many other organizations.

Yoine Goldstein SENATE OF CANADA PHOTO

When tensions flared between Montreal's Ashkenazic and Sephardic communities in the early 1980s, Goldstein was tapped to reach a truce.

He was, for many years, on the boards of the Jewish Agency for Israel, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Canadian Jewish Congress, and several other community organizations. He was co-founder and co-president of the Tolerance Foundation, which has worked for decades to educate young people about the value of tolerance.

It was during his tenure with the Tolerance Foundation, now known as "Ensemble, for the respect of diversity," where "all aspects of Yoine were in full display," remarked Sen. Marc Gold, also a Montreal lawyer who was named to the Senate in 2016.

Gold praised Goldstein's "eloquence and erudition, his impressive intellect and deep wisdom, his sensitivity to people, his love of his city, province and country. Underlying all these were his values. His commitment to social justice and his hatred of prejudice and discrimination in all its forms ... his commitment to a society of inclusion and opportunity for all."

Gold said, "These were values firmly rooted in the Jewish tradition of which he was so proud, and which was an integral part of who he was as a person."

Goldstein taught bankruptcy law at the University of Montreal for more than 25 years. In 1998 he received the Bronfman Medal for Community Service.

He is survived by his wife Elaine (née Rapkin), children, Doron and Dahna, daughter-in-law Sarah, grandson Ezra, and his sister Mindel. He was predeceased by siblings Moishe and Israel. ■

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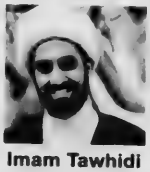
THREE JOURNEYS FROM DIFFERENT FAITH TRADITIONS

Join us ONLINE for a discussion on Israel's Diversity from the perspectives of a Jew, a Muslim, and a Christian as they share their thoughts on the state of Israel, a freedom-loving nation that lives, breathes and advances diversity.



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DR. LAURIE CARDOZA-MOORE, a passionate Christian who advocates for Christians to support the teachings of the Talmud, will impress you with her abiding love for the State of Israel and her call to Christians to stand with Israel.

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on the passing of

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COVID-19 terrifies parents of seriously ill kids

SUSAN MINUK
Special to The CJN

As COVID-19 tightens its grasp on our global society, families are adjusting to a new way of living. And while many parents have taken comfort knowing that children are less susceptible to the coronavirus, for parents of medically compromised children, the threat this virus presents is terrifying.

Dana Geall is a mother to 12-year-old triplets Brody, Taylor and Cole Florence. All three have cerebral palsy and require 24-7 care. Before the pandemic, Geall and her family relied on many professionals, including teachers, nurses and therapists. Now the family is living in a self-contained bubble at home relying only a couple of meticulously screened nurses and personal support workers who are following the same protocols of self quarantine in their own homes.

"I must protect my children. I'm not a person who likes to live in fear - this (COVID-19) is the type of thing that takes children like mine," Geall said. "Back in 2017, Taylor and Cole got the flu and they recovered. But Brody quickly went from having the flu to pneumonia to going into septic shock to the doctor having a sit-down conversation in the (intensive care unit) telling us he had a 50/50 chance of living or dying."

Ella and her younger sister Talia are entertained by their 'big sister' via Zoom.
CHAI LIFELINE PHOTO

The siblings, including 20-month-old Jagger, are all very close.

"They have questions that are not easy to answer," Geall said. "The kids started watching *Harry Potter* and we're reading *Hana's Suitcase*, a beautiful book about the Holocaust. Often when people see us, they feel bad for us or pity us but they really shouldn't because I have the most loving, happy and wonderful kids."

Jacob Trossman also needs 24-hour care. He has Pelizaeus-Merzbacher disease (PMD). Jacob can't move and can't talk and needs to be repositioned frequently. If he coughs, someone needs to ensure he's not choking. Jacob is in Grade 11 and intellectually understands everything. He communicates by blinking his eyes for 'yes.'

"Jacob requires three nursing shifts a day," his mother, Marcy White said. "Jacob is so vulnerable. He ended up in the hospital for almost a year when he got a cold."

The days are long and the family is getting out for walks, but careful to keep a safe distance from others.

"Jacob is watching shows on his iPad, working his way through *Suits*. Our world, in terms of what Jacob can do today, hasn't changed that much but the fear that we always live with has exploded exponentially," White said. "To think, before all of this, we were working on getting Jacob his passport – planning to take Jacob on a wish trip in May for his 18th birthday."

Organizations across the country are devoted to social distancing with love.

Mordechai Rothman, executive director of Chai Lifeline Canada, an organization that helps children with serious illnesses and their families said, "We support kids who, themselves, had to be in isolation due to illness and cancer treatment. And for them it's like everyone now in the world has to deal with what they're dealing with for the last two or three years.

"Zoom is our new best friend. We have created online resources, it could be visiting museums, watching a magic show or participating in a Zumba class. We're still able to provide meals in the community and our big brothers and big sisters are meeting through Zoom."

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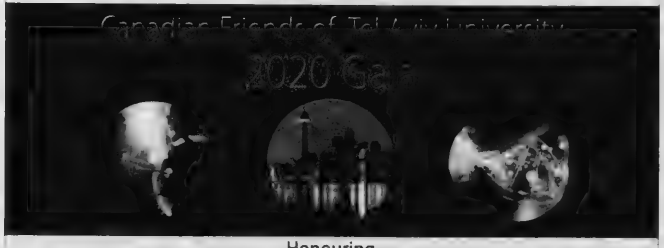

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From left, Marcy, Sierra, Andrew, Jamie, and Jacob

Chai Lifeline offers after school programming that is normally by invitation.

"We will be doing that for the community at large. Activities will include crafts, baking, online seminars and workshops from our experts talking about anxiety and how to clean for Passover with a house full of kids," Rothman said. "We are no longer bringing in volunteers, but that being said, if a family can't afford a ride to a medical appointment, we do offer them a ride via Uber if they are willing to take it. We will cover the costs and arrange for that."

For many children and adults with disabilities, the change in routine and schedule is difficult. That's why DANI, an organization for adults with physical or cognitive challenges, has offered its services online.

> *this COVID-19 is the type of thing that takes children like mine*
>
> **Dana Geail**

"Flexibility is often an issue and this isolating situation has demanded daily resilience and adjustability," Susie Sokol, the co-founder and director of DANI, said. "Our staff have set up classes [...] you can Zoom in for davening, learn how to keep healthy or participate in an art and book study."

Ann Szabo, is the resource manager at Reena, a 24/7 organization for young adults with developmental disabilities.

"We are trying to keep our doors open while practicing social distancing, offering alternative programs for some families who may not be able to keep loved ones at home without going into crises," she said.

Reena has also assembled activity totes with educational resources to be delivered to about 600 people in the community. ■

Brody, Dana, Taylor, Jason, holding Jagger, and Cole

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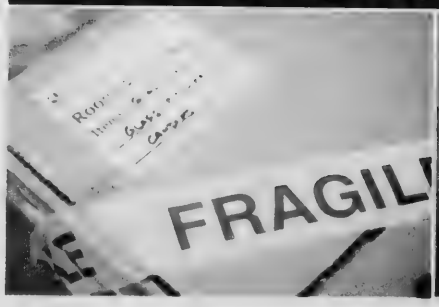

Strict new protocols in place for funerals

CJN STAFF

Toronto Hebrew Memorial Parks (THMP), which operates the two largest Jewish cemeteries in the Greater Toronto Area, has instituted new policies related to the COVID-19 virus.

Effective March 25, 14 new directives will guide burials and mourners at Pardes Shalom and Pardes Chaim, both located in Vaughan, Ont.

In a statement posted on its website, THMP said the gates of its cemeteries will be locked and will only be opened by its staff, and only to permit entry for scheduled graveside funerals.

The new protocols are:

• If someone has died from COVID-19 or is strongly suspected to have died from it, his/her burial will be carried out with only clergy and cemetery and funeral chapel staff in attendance. "To be clear," THMP's statement said, "anyone exposed to that deceased person may not attend the graveside service, and they will not be permitted on our cemetery grounds. Failure to comply with this directive will result in immediate summonsing of the police as a public and health emergency situation, and criminal charges shall be laid."

• The only exception to the above will be the case in which a particular family member or representative(s) of the bereaved family presents the funeral chapel and the cemetery administration with a letter, signed by an Ontario licensed physician who was involved in the care of the deceased leading up to his/her death, that certifies that the proposed attendee is not someone who has a quarantine obligation pursuant to the government of Ontario or other legislated COVID-19 protocols.

• The funeral chapel must prepare a deceased person who has died of COVID-19 or is strongly suspected to have died of COVID-19 with the required protocols, including the double wrapping of the deceased in plastic before the sealing of the casket.

• Graveside funerals for non-COVID-19 related deaths will be limited to 20 people, excluding clergy and funeral chapel staff.

• Individuals attending graveside funerals must remain in their vehicles until they are instructed by THMP cemetery staff and/or funeral chapel staff.

• Individuals at the service must stand at least six feet from the grave, and at least six feet apart from each other.

• Individuals at the service must sign a register and provide contact information should tracing of infection become necessary.

• Funeral directors/assistants shall wait until the casket is lowered and THMP cemetery staff have removed the lowering device and have created a social distance of at least six feet from the grave before allowing individuals to approach the grave.

• Funeral directors/assistants will direct families to create a social distance at graveside of at least six feet from one another and will use best efforts to remind families during the service. At all times, visitors and funeral chapel staff must always remain at least six feet away from THMP cemetery staff.

• Only two shovels will be provided to enable attending clergy and one family member (please consult with your clergy to determine who that should be according to halakhah) to throw dirt onto the casket. Once the top surface of only the casket is covered with a layer of dirt, attendees will be expected to complete the service, return to their vehicles and leave the cemetery, after which cemetery staff will complete the filling of the grave. There is to be no passing of shovels. We are expecting that the total attendance time within the cemetery grounds for any graveside funeral will be 30 minutes.

• All pallbearers must wear gloves and anyone who handles the cemetery's shovels must also wear gloves.

• No unveilings or grave visitations will be permitted until further notice, as these are not considered to be essential attendances in the current circumstances.

• The cemetery building will be closed to the public, including the public washrooms.

• To mitigate risk of transmission, THMP will not provide any washing cups or water at the outdoor hand washing stations at the cemeteries. Visitors should bring their own water for ritual hand washing after their visits.

The new protocols were devised in consultation with cemetery colleagues and lay leaders, and were reviewed by the rabbinate, THMP executive director Howard Mammon told *The CJN* via email.

"There has been a lot of deliberation regarding the protocols given the essential nature of our operations and the Ontario government's mandates to the bereavement sector," Mammon noted.

He added that THMP shares the same protocols with Bathurst Lawn Memorial Park, Beth Tzedec Memorial Park, Mount Sinai Memorial Park and the cemeteries Shaarei Shomayim Congregation operates at Bathurst Lawn, Mount Sinai and the one on McCowan Road. ■

Passover brings extra challenges to federations

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

The UJA Federation of Greater Toronto is also working hard to make sure everybody is prepared for the upcoming holiday. UJA Federation recently recruited volunteers to help pack and deliver boxes of kosher-for-Passover food. The packing was done in the parking lot outside its building to accommodate social distancing measures for the volunteers.

Genesis, which bills itself as UJA Federation's Centre for Jewish Innovation, says more than 1,800 boxes were distributed to more than 4,000 individuals in less than three days.

UJA Genesis has also organized a phone tree to reach out to people in the community and check on their needs. As of March 26, 350-plus volunteers had already checked in on more than 7,000 community members, with more to come. UJA Federation also sent out an email to its members that same evening, detailing some of the steps it has taken, on top of providing groceries for those in need, including increasing support for Holocaust survivors, rent subsidies for seniors and advocating for government investments in charities.

> *We're trying to make do with what we have and make sure it all gets spread out and everyone is able to get some matzah*
>
> **Naomi Rosenfeld, Atlantic Jewish Council**

"Because of our reach with more than 100 institutions in the community, because of our resources and the comprehensive lens through which we look at any challenge facing our community, this is really an all-hands-on-deck approach," said Steve McDonald, UJA Federation's vice-president of communications and marketing. "We're engaging synagogues, day schools, summer camps, JCCs and social service agencies to ensure that they have what they need to get through this crisis and, to the greatest extent possible, to continue providing continuity of service to the community."

Federations across the country find themselves in similar situations, a unique position to co-ordinate the community from their vantage points as umbrella organizations. Right now, it's all about the short-term future, ensuring that everybody's basic needs are met. But the federations need to keep an eye on the long-term as well, which may mean shutting down non-essential services to save money, said Szlak, the Federation CJA CEO.

"Our ability to come out of this in the future as a strong Jewish community will depend on the organizations making very difficult decisions today to conserve cash to make sure that on Day 1 of the post-coronavirus trauma, organizations will be there in a strong position to address communal needs," Szlak said. But for now, he added, with the focus on meeting immediate needs, "that is a much, much deeper and longer conversation." ■

Guest Voice

Co-parenting during a pandemic

Dan Horowitz

As a divorced man and the father of two, co-parenting, at the best of times, is a challenging and stressful exercise.

In today's new and, for the most part, uncharted world, thanks to the coronavirus, which has essentially placed us all into a state of self-quarantine and fear, locked down entire cities, shut down schools and created the need for social distancing, the level of that stress is unprecedented.

Today, a couple living apart but raising children jointly face new challenges as individual ideologies and philosophies are challenged, filling us with even more dread as we wonder, and worry about what is going on in the 'other house.'

"With divorced parents who are effectively co-parenting, it is important to try to be on the same page for children's mental health," says Leanne Matlow, a cognitive behavioural therapy counsellor based in Toronto, and the founder of Mental Health Empowerment Day. "To reduce anxiety in a very uncertain time, routine is important. Wake up, get dressed, eat properly, get exercise, same bed times, and keep up with school work and chores. Obviously, it is best if this happens in both homes."

While my ex-wife and I enjoy a mostly positive co-parenting relationship today, there are no doubt many couples still dealing with the toxicity of their divorce and, especially in the climate of this global pandemic, there are undoubtedly still worries, suspicions and anxieties about even the simplest and most basic tenets of their divorce agreement.

We share custody of our kids 50/50. Great. Easy. Kids are happy, the parents are happy. But each time we pack the kids up to take them to the parent of the week, I worry. Are these weekly moves putting our kids at greater risk of getting the virus? Would they be better off staying with me until this nightmare ends? Would they be better staying with a loving mother and her strong familial support team? Then again, we couldn't allow the kids to be anywhere near my wife's parents or my mother, as children, often carriers of the virus, pose a potentially deadly risk to the elderly and those with a compromised immune system.

The thought that we are somehow placing them more in danger by switching houses every few days fills me with dread, but, then again, maybe it's better for them.

"I assume that everyone is now social distancing, so, again, keeping routine is very important," Matlow says. "It's okay for the children to continue switching homes as per the divorce agreement. And, if there's more than one child involved, parents might even want to split the kids up from each other for a bit to give them some distance and private time too. These are tough, long days for everyone."

It can also be hard and stressful when one parent is worried about the other not maintaining appropriate social distancing or taking the non-stop advice of medical experts seriously. To be safe, I am living as would a monk, albeit a monk who occasionally enjoys a glass of vodka.

Another challenge is finding suitable activities to keep the kids entertained and break up their miserable boredom and stress. I realized, soon after the outbreak that play dates were not an option.

"I think that like most things, there is a process," Matlow says. "I doubt that when school suddenly stopped, most parents thought that that meant no play dates, but it does. The latest studies say that everyone has to social distance and stay in small nuclear groups as children can be carriers and we can all be non-symptomatic and still be carriers."

As for other tricks to keep juvenile boredom to a minimum, Matlow has some advice.

"One big issue will be screen time; both the big screen and the little screen," she says. "Try to have a family movie time so that each individual is not on their device endlessly alone, feeling even more isolated. Parents should also encourage kids to reach out to their friends on the phone, web or by text wherever they are."

This is all new to me, to us, to all of us, and unfortunately there is no handbook, no instructions to guide us through these decisions. Sure, I lived through the SARS epidemic in 2003, but as a childless bachelor who only had to worry about myself.

The bottom line is that, like our divorce agreement, it all comes down to trust, respect, co-operation and remembering that we still have one, make that two things in common: our children. We both pray that one day, many, many years from now, they will tell their children and maybe even their grandchildren, how they survived – even without play dates – the coronavirus of 2020. ■

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Free loan society offers emergency assistance

ALEX ROSE
arose@thecjn.ca

As businesses shut down and people are laid off in response to the spread of the coronavirus, Jewish organizations are stepping up to help support vulnerable people in the community. One of those organizations is Jewish Free Loans Toronto (JFLT), which recently made available a loan for people struggling with the economic repercussions of COVID-19.

JFLT made sure applying for its new COVID-19 loan would be a smooth process, said Marra Messinger, executive director of JFLT. That means easy terms to meet and a quick turnaround. The organization is offering up to $2,500 loans with no guarantors, compared to its usual rate of $1,000 for no guarantors. It's also offering $5,000 for one guarantor and $8,000 for two.

Messinger added that JFLT is streamlining the process of applying for these special COVID-19 loans. Instead of requiring people to come into the office for interviews prior to being accepted for loans and to pick up their cheques, it is now conducting its interviews by phone and depositing loans directly into people's bank accounts. As well, it has also sped up its interview process. Before the coronavirus, JFLT would conduct interviews every two weeks, but now it is notifying people as soon as it reasonably can, Messinger said.

All of JFLT's loans are interest-free, in accordance with the biblical prohibition against charging interest and Maimonides's belief that the highest level of charity is a loan or other source of support that puts a person on the path to self-sufficiency. The organization was first founded in 1924, to help support Jewish small businesses in Toronto. They were necessary for the Jewish community at the time since established businesses generally wouldn't hire workers who couldn't work on Saturdays.

"We know that there will be a financial hardship and crunch for a lot of people. And we have the means and ability to help people. That's our *raison d'être*, to help people in need help themselves," she said. "We just want everyone in the community to know that we are here to help."

So far, Messinger said around 15 people have applied for the COVID-19 loan in the last few days, which is higher than the usual application rate. Messinger invites people in need to apply for the loans, and those with the means to do so to donate, as all of JFLT's capital comes from donations and grants. ■

To apply or donate, go to https://jewishfreeloan.ca/corona-virus-loan/

Charities adjust to provide food for those in need

ALEX ROSE
arose@thecjn.ca

It was over the weekend of March 13 and 14 that the staff at MAZON Canada realized the coronavirus would likely represent a major challenge in the work they do. MAZON, which bills itself as the Jewish response to hunger, is a grassroots network that helps provide food to vulnerable Canadians, both Jewish and non-Jewish. It accomplishes that goal by supporting over 130 programs across the country, including food banks, school nutrition programs, hot meals, community gardens and others.

MAZON realized it would need to make emergency grants to its partners to help guard against the incoming wave of food insecurity that would arise as a result of the coronavirus, and take measures to protect against it. That meant a complete overhaul of its granting system, said Izzy Waxman, MAZON Canada's director.

"Our granting selection process is probably going to be completely different this year. Our usual process is very thorough, but the downside is that it takes time. There's three full months from when applications open until decisions are announced. That's normal for many grant makers and it's alright when organizations apply each year but this is an emergency situation and we're pushed to completely rethink how we can identify need and meet it ASAP. People who just lost work can't wait three months before there's food in their cupboards," she said in an email to *The CJN*.

On top of the emergency grants that MAZON is providing, it's also making efforts to offer guidance, support and structure to pop-up community efforts that may be lacking in those departments.

"We might offer fundraising advice, organizational oversight, things that non-profits know but that volunteer pop-ups might not. It's different depending on the project – we're trying to use our network to find need and meet it, rather than define a problem and a solution in advance," Waxman said.

Those grassroots organizations are really feeling the stress right now, Waxman said. She said many Canadians are skipping meals and rationing food because they don't know where their next meal will come from. Many of the programs that usually operate rely on volunteers, donations from businesses and fundraising events, all of which have been cancelled due to the virus.

In Toronto, B'nai Brith Canada also had to make some on-the-fly adjustments in the wake of the coronavirus. The organization had to cancel its seniors program on March 16, said CEO Michael Mostyn, when it became clear that it wasn't safe for groups of people to congregate – let alone groups of Holocaust survivors and seniors.

B'nai Brith Canada food donations

In follow-up work, B'nai Brith realized a lot of seniors and other vulnerable people were having difficulty securing food, so it decided to take action and round up donations and volunteers to directly distribute food to people in need. Mostyn said B'nai Brith already has experience in similar direct food deliveries from its Hanukkah and Purim food basket programs.

The target demographic for the deliveries, Mostyn said, is twofold. "First, it's those that are living below the poverty line that really can't afford, at this point in time, to purchase a proper meal, and it's also primarily targeting our elderly, who really need to be socially isolated at the moment."

He said B'nai Brith will be continuing to look for donations and volunteers as long as this crisis is ongoing. Donors can support one family a week for $75, and it's simple to sign up on the website, Mostyn said. Already, he has seen the support come pouring in.

"The initial response has been very, very positive," he said. "However, we're in this for the long haul. It's not the short sprint. And so, even though we've had many generous donors step up to the plate, we do need to ensure that, week over week, we're going to be in a position to continue providing this essential support to the community." ■

To donate to MAZON Canada's COVID-19 response, go to MAZONCanada.ca/covid-19. To donate to B'nai Brith's COVID-19 response, go to BnaiBrith.ca/covid19.

'God does not expect a classic seder' this year

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

He also sees a parallel between this year's small family seders and night of the Exodus when the Jewish people fled from Egypt: that night everyone remained at home within their family units.

"There has never been a replica of the original Pesach night that we had in Exodus. This is a potential experience of Pesach you may never have again."

Rabbi Karfunkel advised people to "reshape their expectations" about their seders: "God does not expect a classic seder in the year of the coronavirus."

As the community gears up for Passover, the rabbis interviewed for this article all mentioned that they are reaching out to their congregants and making sure their older and more isolated members have enough food and other resources.

Rabbi Ed Elkin, spiritual leader of the First Narayever Congregation said one of the biggest challenges of social distancing is that many people will be alone on the seder nights.

He said connecting with those congregants through technology on the holy days is not an option for him because the Narayever is a traditional congregation.

However, the use of Zoom technology may become more acceptable given the recent controversial ruling by some Sephardic Orthodox rabbis in Israel, Rabbi Grover said. "It permits the use of Zoom to connect isolated people during the seder for this year only."

Michelle Katz

He stressed that this ruling is extremely controversial and there has been a lot of "pushback" from many observant communities.

He said he will also be sending out information on how to conduct a seder if one is alone. "It's actually possible, but not ideal. There are certain mitzvot you have to do."

Nevertheless, being alone on the holiday could be very distressing for people and meditation may actually be a tool to counter such isolation on those seder nights, according to Michelle Katz, a Jewish spiritual director, yoga teacher and meditation therapist.

Katz leads Jewish meditation sessions at Beth Tzedec Congregation on the first Saturday of each month.

She said meditation can also alleviate the anxiety and loneliness that people may be feeling in the wake of COVID-19.

Katz explained that the focus on breath and deep breathing slows the mind down and this practice can boost one's mood and spirit.

Some people may also find comfort in breathing in the words of the Psalms or other liturgy. "All those aspects of the tradition can be linked into the meditation."

She said they might also try to keep in mind that being alone physically does not mean they are spiritually alone. "We are all linked to our ancestors through our tradition ... the whole story of Pesach, every word in the haggadah tells us that we have a connection to our past."

Some people observing the holiday alone may be comfortable taking advantage of the online connections offered by more liberal congregations.

Rabbi Dolgin said that as a modern congregation Temple Sinai is making use of technology. "We are developing resources to be used for an online experience during the seder time. We're already streaming. We in leadership want to maximize our ability to provide for people's spiritual needs from a distance."

Rabbi Grover said he used the technology for the pre-Passover custom of selling hametz, food that is not kosher for Passover. The sale is actually a legal agreement whereby the congregant meets in person with the rabbi to appoints him to sell his hametz to a non-Jew.

Since person-to-person contact is not possible this year, the rabbi said he was able to adapt the agreement and make it a legally valid sale through a virtual transaction.

Rabbi Grover said he is using all kinds of technological tools like YouTube and Zoom to connect with his congregants.

"We're trying to move as much of the regular content as possible to a virtual platform like Zoom," he said. "It's Zoom Judaism. Zoom, Zoom, Zoom. That's my life now." ■

INTERNATIONAL

After a long deadlock, a government emerges

MICHAEL BACHNER
AND **TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF**
JERUSALEM

After a year of seemingly unbreakable political deadlock that left the country without a fully functioning government and sent Israelis to the polls three times, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Blue and White party chairman Benny Gantz on Thursday, March 26, set aside their differences to enter into an emergency unity coalition

The Likud, Yamina, United Torah Judaism and Shas parties, which are negotiating in coalition talks with Benny Gantz's Blue and White party as a single bloc, are going to get at least 15 ministries in total in the new government, according to reports on Sunday.

According to the reports, the imminent deal would also see the 15-member Blue and White — possibly joined by the four members of Labor and Gesher and by Telem MKs Zvi Hauser and Yoaz Hendel, formerly of Blue and White — receive a similar number of cabinet portfolios, meaning almost every MK in Gantz's party will become a minister.

Netanyahu and Gantz held an all-night meeting into the morning of Sunday, March 29, on the terms of a unity government. A joint statement from the two said they reached "understandings and significant progress" during the talks at the Prime Minister's Residence in Jerusalem, without elaborating. Further talks were to be held with the aim of reaching a signed deal, according to the statement.

The unity talks came after Gantz, in a shocking move, was elected Knesset speaker Thursday, setting the stage for a coalition with Netanyahu, leading to the splintering of the Blue and White alliance, which had campaigned during the three elections over the past year on not joining a government led by Netanyahu due to his indictment on graft charges.

As part of the negotiations, Netanyahu is seeking legislation saying that an acting prime minister under indictment can continue to serve, in order to ensure he can fill that role when his prime ministerial rotation with Gantz is slated to go into effect. Currently, ministers must resign if they face criminal charges, but the law does not explicitly refer to a prime minister.

Head of the Blue and White party Benny Gantz TOMER NEUBERG/FLASH90 PHOTO

In an op-ed for the *Times of Israel Sunday*, Gantz wrote that he was set to join forces with Netanyahu because, "At this time of crisis, I had no choice but to put politics aside and choose the only path that allows us to avoid fourth elections."

He added: "I chose the only path which positions Israel to effectively fight this horrific pandemic: the path of a national emergency government." And responding to criticism from his former allies, he wrote: "There has been a lot of discussion recently about campaign promises, but my core promise to the Israeli public will never change: Israel will always come before everything else."

The equal or near-equal share comes despite Netanyahu's bloc numbering 58 lawmakers, many of whom will be disappointed and some of whom – like Transportation Minister Bezalel Smotrich – have expressed criticism of the emerging government.

According to Channel 12, the ministries to be handed to Netanyahu's bloc are: finance, public security, transportation, education, health, interior, Negev and Galilee, energy, environmental protection, housing and construction, religious affairs, intelligence, regional cooperation, Jerusalem and heritage, and – for at least the next 18 months – the premiership.

Various reports said Blue and White and its allies were to receive the following ministries: defence, foreign, justice, communications, economy, agriculture, welfare, culture, tourism, science, Diaspora, social equality and immigration and absorption.

> *I chose the only path which positions Israel to effectively fight this horrific pandemic*
>
> **Benny Gantz**

According to the emerging deal, Gantz is set to partner with Netanyahu in a coalition and serve initially as defence minister before taking over as prime minister in September 2021, though many political analysts doubt that such a rotation will actually take place. Gabi Ashkenazi, Gantz's deputy, is set to be foreign minister and then take over the Defence Ministry if Gantz becomes prime minister.

Another possibility reported Sunday was that Gantz's party could give up the position of foreign minister, which is high-ranking but relatively low on influence, in exchange for other portfolios.

Channel 12 reported that Culture Minister Miri Regev would replace Gilad Erdan as public security minister, and that Justice Minister Amir Ohana would become transportation minister.

Health Minister Yaakov Litzman would retain his position after refusing to switch to another role despite Gantz's demands, and so would his fellow United Torah Judaism MK Moshe Gafni, who would stay on as the head of the Knesset's Finance Committee.

Gantz and Netanyahu have reportedly agreed that Yuli Edelstein will not be re-elected Knesset speaker after he resigned from the position last week in order to avoid having to carry out a Supreme Court order he disagreed with. Gantz on Thursday, March 26, accused Edelstein of "spitting in the face" of the High Court justices. The speaker's role will go to another Likud member instead, likely Tourism Minister Yariv Levin.

Also, Channel 12 said the immigration and absorption portfolio was likely to go to MK Pnina Tamano-Shata, who on Sunday announced she was jumping ship from Yair Lapid's Yesh Atid faction within Blue and White and joining Gantz.

It would be a blow to Gadi Yevarkan, a former Blue and White MK who defected before the March 2 elections to join Likud, and who had previously been promised the role.

Following Gantz's election Thursday as Knesset speaker, the Yesh Atid and Telem factions filed a formal request to break away from Blue and White, leaving only Gantz's faction to join forces with Netanyahu's Likud-led bloc.

On Sunday afternoon, Gantz's faction – originally called Israel Resilience – was given approval to keep using the Blue and White party name.

Gantz and his colleagues in Blue and White have said that the only alternative to joining a Netanyahu-led coalition would have been a fourth round of elections and that a government is needed to deal with the coronavirus outbreak.

Yesh Atid head Yair Lapid and Moshe Ya'alon, the leader of Telem, have categorically rejected entering a unity government with Likud as long as it is headed by Netanyahu. Both have harshly criticized Gantz for breaking up their alliance, with Lapid excoriating him during a press conference with Ya'alon on Thursday for "crawling" into a coalition of "extremists and extortionists."■

Times of Israel / Timesofisrael.com

Haredim clash as police crack down on violations

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF
JERUSALEM

Police cracked down on violations of government restrictions against gatherings in Jerusalem's ultra-Orthodox Mea Shearim neighbourhood, arresting four people and fining at least another 30, amid an outcry against perceived inaction by police against segments of the haredi population's apparent flouting of the coronavirus regulations.

Officers entered the central Jerusalem neighbourhood early Monday, March 30, checking for prayer services being held in violation of the government's orders against such gatherings.

"During this [operation], the officers took out and broke up crowds of dozens and hundreds that had clustered in synagogues and informal houses of worship," police said.

According to police, four people were arrested and brought in for questioning.

More than 25 people received fines of NIS 5,000 (close to $2,000)for violating the public health statutes and another five people received fines of NIS 500 (close to $200) for straying further than the approved 100 metres from their homes.

Israeli police officers arrest haredim in Mea Shearim on March 29. OLIVIER FITOUSSI/FLASH90 PHOTO

Police say one house of worship, on Zonenfeld Street, was also shuttered for 30 days following a court hearing today after its owner was found to have violated the government regulations.

"Police operations in the past week have significantly brought down the number of people on the streets of the neighbourhood, and [the officers'] presence will continue to ensure that all residents adhere to the regulations," police said.

In police footage from the operation, residents of the neighbourhood can be heard calling the officers "Nazis" and "criminals," and referring to the female officers as *shiksahs*, a slur for non-Jewish women.

Meanwhile, on Monday, three hotels and yeshivah buildings were set to open as special quarantine centres for the ultra-Orthodox community, as the government and religious authorities stepped up the fight against the spread of the corona virus in densely populated haredi areas

Ultra-Orthodox patients make up around half the COVID-19 patients being treated in various major hospitals around the country, according to unofficial figures cited by the two leading Israeli news channels on Sunday evening.

The reports came amid officials' growing impatience with the ultra-Orthodox community, some of whose members have appeared to flout government orders restricting public gatherings, movement and activities – imposed in an effort to curb the spread of the virus, which has so far infected upward of 4,300 Israelis.

Two hotels were being prepared to start housing ultra-Orthodox patients on Tuesday, with two more such hotels set to open at a later date, Channel 12 reported Monday morning.

The hotels will cater to that community's needs, including food with strict kosher supervision and gender segregation.

It wasn't immediately clear where the hotels were being set up.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31

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Stay safe. Stay strong.
The CJN Team

Netanyahu self-isolates as a precautionary measure

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF
JERUSALEM

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his advisers are voluntarily entering quarantine as a precaution until Health Ministry officials finish their epidemiological investigation into whether he was exposed to the coronavirus, his office said Monday, hours after saying the move was unnecessary.

"Even before the epidemiological investigation is over and to remove all doubt, the prime minister has decided that he and his close staff will remain in isolation until the epidemiological investigation is completed," the Prime Minister's Office said in a statement.

"In accordance with the findings, the Health Ministry and the personal physician of the prime minister will set a day to end the isolation," it added.

Netanyahu's aide Rivka Paluch was confirmed infected with the virus on Sunday, but it remains unclear whether the prime minister was in close contact with her.

Reports earlier in the day had said Netanyahu would have to be quarantined, but his bureau countered that, saying in a statement that the premier hadn't been in the same room as Paluch in the last two weeks.

"The initial assessment is that there is no need for the prime minister to be in quarantine since he was not in close contact with the patient and did not meet with her," the PMO said. "Likewise, from an initial check, the two were not together in the same room for the past fortnight. The epidemiological investigation is ongoing."

The earlier statement had noted that in recent weeks the prime minister and those around him have been strictly adhering to Health Ministry guidelines under the watch of his personal physician, and that most discussions Netanyahu holds are via video-link from his residence.

However, Hebrew-language media reports said Netanyahu had in fact met with Paluch, along with a reported confirmation from his office.

Channel 12 news reported that Netanyahu was expected to self-quarantine for a week after meeting with Paluch on Thursday, March 26. Paluch, Netanyahu's adviser on ultra-Orthodox affairs, tested positive hours after her husband was hospitalized with COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus. According to the report, health officials were deliberating on what steps the premier should take following notification of her diagnosis.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pictured here with adviser Rivka Paluch on March 3. Paluch has been diagnosed with COVID-19.
YONATAN SINDEL/FLASH90 PHOTO

For Netanyahu, the prospect of following Health Ministry guidelines requiring all those suspected of exposure to the virus to self-quarantine for 14 days would come when he is in the midst of marathon negotiations to form a unity government with Blue and White leader MK Benny Gantz, in the wake of elections at the beginning of the month. Netanyahu has also been holding intense talks with health officials and his ministers on how to deal with the coronavirus outbreak.

Under Health Ministry orders, tens of thousands of Israelis are in self-quarantine due to possible exposure to the virus and the entire country is in an almost total lockdown that has seen most of the population confined to their homes, only allowed out for essential needs.

The Knesset Guard has examined security camera footage from the parliament building to determine whom Paluch was in contact with at the Israeli parliament on March 16, 23 and 26. Letters were sent to lawmakers and staff telling them they must immediately enter isolation if they were in contact with the aide, Ynet reported.

No further details were given on the identities of those who may be required to enter quarantine. Paluch reportedly met with several lawmakers on March 26 amid frenzied negotiations as the Knesset voted Gantz in as its new speaker, signaling a unity government deal was being hammered out.

The Prime Minister's Office had reportedly confirmed Sunday that Paluch met with Netanyahu on March 26 but said that "the appropriate distance was kept."

"The rules for keeping distance from the prime minister and those near him were maintained in accordance with the instructions of the Health Ministry, even before the family member was found positive," sources close to Paluch told Channel 12 on Sunday.

There was no immediate word on the adviser's condition. ■

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Man, 58, is Israel's youngest victim

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF
TEL AVIV

A 58-year-old man with "very significant pre-existing conditions" died of the coronavirus in central Israel's Assaf Harofeh Medical Center, making him the 16th and youngest person in Israel to succumb to the disease, the hospital said Monday.

According to the medical centre, located in the Tel Aviv suburb of Be'er Yaakov, the patient was brought into the hospital from Holon on Sunday night.

"Unfortunately, he passed away this morning," the hospital said in a statement. "We share the family's grief and send our condolences."

There were no immediate details on his identity.

Three fatalities were recorded on Sunday. Of the 16 people to die in Israel from COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus, 13 have been over the age of 70. An 82-year-old Israeli man in Italy also died of the disease.

The Health Ministry said Monday morning that the number of Israelis infected with the coronavirus was 4,347, a rise of 100 cases since Sunday night.

The cases included 80 in serious condition, of whom 63 were on ventilators, the ministry said. Another 81 were in moderate condition, 134 had recovered, and the rest had mild symptoms.

The tally soared beyond the 4,000 mark on Sunday, with an increase of 628 cases in 24 hours. The daily increase was the single largest since the first coronavirus case was recorded in the country, and put it in 17th place in terms of infection numbers worldwide.

One of those in serious condition is a man in his 20s who had no pre-existing medical issues. Due to increasing difficulty breathing, he was sedated and hooked up to a ventilator, Samson Assuta Ashdod University Hospital said Sunday.

The continued rise in virus cases came as a top Health Ministry official reportedly warned that Israel needed to prepare for a situation in which 5,000 people infected with the virus needed ventilators.

"This is a difficult scenario, but we can endure it," Dr. Vered Ezra, head of medical management at the ministry, was quoted as saying by Channel 12 news in a briefing.

Israelis were ordered starting last Wednesday to remain in their homes unless they are taking part in a small number of approved activities, including purchasing food and medicine, going to work, or taking a short walk no more than 100 metres from their home. ■

Times of Israel / Timesofisrael.com

Hotels will be used to house some haredim

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29

The Jerusalem Municipality, said Mayor Moshe Lion, had been instructed by Interior Minister Aryeh Deri to open two hotels in the city's west and two in its east, indicating they were also meant to house members of the Arab community, many of whom live in similar density to the ultra-Orthodox. Channel 12 indicated hotels were set to open in the cities of Bnei Brak and Beit Shemesh.

The initiative came after officials understood it was extremely hard to create effective quarantine in haredi-majority cities and neighbourhoods, which are tight-knit and densely populated, with large families packed into small apartments.

Since the Health Ministry's strategy for relieving some of the burden on hospitals has been to require home quarantine of many virus carriers showing mild or no symptoms, the solution was needed to create effective isolation that is impossible to achieve in many haredi neighbourhoods.

Additionally, another isolation centre will be opened by the Bnei Brak municipality in an empty building that normally houses a religious seminary. It has been converted into a guesthouse with private rooms and regular meals.

At first that building will house dozens of people who haven't tested positive for the virus but are required by the Health Ministry to self-quarantine for 14 days after returning from abroad or being near a confirmed carrier. Later, it will house hundreds of people.

The new compounds were welcomed by Bnei Brak's top rabbis, who published a call for residents to co-operate with the efforts. Authorities hope that will stop the current rapid spread of the virus in those areas.

The cabinet on Sunday held a lengthy discussion how to encourage stricter adherence to virus-related restrictions in the ultra-Orthodox community.

During the meeting Interior Minister Aryeh Deri, who leads the ultra-Orthodox Shas party, was tapped as the government point man on the issue, according to Channel 12.

The cabinet was set to hold another meeting to vote on further restrictions on movements and the economy on Sunday evening, but it was pushed off to Monday.

Ministers were expected to approve, via teleconference, the deployment of hundreds of soldiers to enforce lockdown rules and could also green-light further curbs on the economy, or even order a full lockdown of the country.

Channel 13 reported that ministers would also consider the Health Ministry's urging of a total lockdown on the entire population for the first night of Passover, when Jews customarily hold seders with extended family and friends.

The reports came after the Finance Ministry's director-general said the government is considering imposing a full quarantine on the Tel Aviv suburb of Bnei Brak and other predominantly ultra-Orthodox areas amid the sharply rising number of coronavirus cases in those places.

"We're having quite a few problems with ultra-Orthodox society, in places like Bnei Brak," Shai Babad told the Knesset's Special Committee on coronavirus on Sunday.

He added: "Some of the [cabinet] deliberation was talking about how we could maybe succeed in putting a lockdown in place and isolating those same areas."

Bnei Brak has seen the second highest number of infections in the country, according to Health Ministry figures, after Jerusalem, where the coronavirus has also spread through the community.

Officials have attributed the high infection rates in the area to a lack of adherence to Health Ministry guidelines – there have been many reports of large gatherings taking place in those communities for weddings, prayer services and other events in spite of announced restrictions – crowded conditions in many ultra-Orthodox communities, and a lack of access by many to media and communication means.

In the most recent large-scale violation of government orders, hundreds of people took part in a funeral procession in Bnei Brak early Sunday, jamming closely together in contravention of social distancing rules as police looked on without taking action. The force later defended the decision by saying a clash with the participants could have brought thousands to the streets and that it was therefore preferable to let the crowd disperse on its own.

As of Monday morning, 4,347 people had been diagnosed with the novel coronavirus, including 80 in serious condition, the Health Ministry said. Of the serious cases, 63 were attached to ventilators. There have been 16 deaths from the virus. ■

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The Kotel NIMROD SHANIT PHOTO

A VIRTUAL TRIP TO ISRAEL

VIVA SARAH PRESS
SPECIAL TO THE CJN, TEL AVIV

Stay home is the message governments are sending to their citizens the world over. But staying inside in self-isolation is hardly a reason to forgo travel.

Israel was named one of the world's top destinations for 2020 by international tourism industry experts and there's never been a better time to soak up Israeli culture. Virtually, of course.

With the ongoing outbreak and calls for social distancing, the global tourism industry has taken an enormous battering. In Israel, the Ministry of Health hammered in the last nail for the local tourist market on March 18, when it announced that it is restricting entry into the country by foreign nationals even if they can prove the ability to self-quarantine.

For many Canadians, and other would-be international travellers, this decision means Israel is physically off-limits for now.

Seeing Israel in person is a matchless experience, but giving up on visiting completely is unnecessary. Virtual travel to Israel is just a click away.

Make sure you're comfy on the couch because the list of things to see and do in Israel online is long.

Israel is a destination for all with religious landmarks, fantastic beaches, historical monuments, national parks, mouth-watering food, and great nightlife. The official Israel tourism website has fun videos for each of these themes. (new.goisrael.com/international/Pages/Videos)

The official Israel YouTube channel also has short video clips of daily events that were a key part of Israeli life before this pandemic, including outdoor markets, archeological sites, street food, and an inside look at startups. (www.youtube.com/user/Israel/videos)

Sadly, Israel shuttered its open-air markets in the last week of March. The lively markets were a calling card for the country before COVID-19. There are many online videos showing better times at these colourful outdoor stalls. If you'd like to see a real-time view, Google Earth includes the Jaffa Flea Market, Shuk Hapishpishim, on its list of global flea markets. (earth.google.com/web/

Travel Trailer Israel, as its name suggests, gives would-be visitors video previews to this country. The app offers educational information about popular sites. The short videos are meant to entice a trip but for now suffice for a virtual tour.(traveltrailerisrael.com/)

Meanwhile, in Jerusalem, there's a live camera feed on the Western Wall. Although somewhat sinister seeing the Old City bare of people at the moment, it is nonetheless a unique visual to see social distancing at this holy site. (www.skylinewebcams.com) and pick Israel from the menu.

If you'd prefer to leave the city and get off the beaten track, the Israel National Trail awaits. This 1,100-kilometre hiking path stretches across the country from top to bottom. Since 2016, the entire trail has been available on Street View on Google Maps.

As the call for isolation and social distancing grows, world museums are closing their doors to the public and opening virtual tours to visitors online instead. Israel, a country with more than 230 museums, is offering its cultural exhibits to a wide-reaching audience online. The Israel Museum in Jerusalem (www.imj.org.il/en/) recently launched a section on its website dedicated to virtual tours of the museum's collections.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Tower of David Museum RICKY RAHMAN PHOTO

The museum staff is creating virtual tours of new exhibits that were meant to open but never did due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The Tel Aviv Museum of Art (www.tamuseum.org.il/en/), Eretz Israel Museum of Art and the six Haifa Museums (https://www.hms.org.il/eng) are all currently augmenting their online presence. On their individual websites, they note more virtual video and audio tours of exhibits are in the making.

Down in the Negev desert, meanwhile, there are live guided virtual tours of Ben Gurion's desert home, where Israel's first prime minister David Ben-Gurion and his wife Paula Ben-Gurion lived. Visitors must register online (www.ben-gurion.co.il/virtual-tour/)for the Hebrew-language real-time tours of the couple's little home.

And perhaps one of the most hyped new experiences of 2020, is the Israeli-Canadian collaboration, The Holy City VR, at the Tower of David Museum.

"This new immersive experience virtually places visitors in some of the most exclusive and hard to reach locations in Jerusalem as if they were actually there," Nimrod Shanit, director and producer of The Holy City, said in a press statement.

When making this online 360-degree virtual reality documentary of the Old City of Jerusalem, Israeli company, Blimey, and Toronto firm, OccupiedVR, used cutting edge 3D video and audio capture technologies that enable real environments to be captured in detail.

The project is supported by the Canada Media Fund, Ontario Creates, the Jerusalem Film Fund and The Tower of David Museum Innovation Lab.

The virtual tour will be available free from the first day of Passover, through Easter, to the first day of Ramadan (April 9-24). www.tod.org.il.

> *These are challenging times for all of us.*
>
> **Eliat Lieber**
> **Director, Tower of David Musuem**

"These are challenging times for us all. My office overlooks the Old City of Jerusalem," said Eilat Lieber, director and chief curator of the Tower of David Museum.

"Millions of prayers and dreams of people from all over the world have been caught between the towers, spires and domes of the city for thousands of years. The city has given hope and inspiration for centuries. At this time, I am reminded of the strength of Jerusalem and hope that the film *The Holy City* will be enjoyed by those from near and far, as it shows the Old City of Jerusalem in all its beauty and makes the holiest sites in Jerusalem accessible to all, especially at a time like this when access is so limited," he said

"VR can enable emotions felt as close to possible as when one is physically present. We hope that for those looking for hope in these uneasy times ... and for those that might turn to prayer and to Jerusalem – might find a little bit of hope when becoming immersed in the Holy City." ■

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What my Magen David means to me

CLARRIE FEINSTEIN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

"Are you Jewish?"

I turned to see a fellow graduate student look at me as he lit his cigarette. Immediately, I was on guard. It was my first night socializing with my program peers at NYU and still uncertain if it was a group I was comfortable conversing with.

"Yes..." I said, unsure of where the conversation would lead.

"Oh, so am I, well half Jewish. It's cool you wear that," he said pointing towards my Magen David necklace. "I don't see that much back home in Calgary."

I looked down at my religious pendant, completely forgetting it was visible around my neck. Putting it on in the morning has become as routine as brushing my teeth and lacing up my shoes. But this wasn't always the case.

Growing up in Toronto, I affiliated with the cultural practices of Judaism, but was unsure of how to navigate this aspect of my life in a predominantly Christian-oriented society. Being the only Jewish kid in my elementary school classes caused feelings of alienation and otherness.

Clarrie Feinstein's Magen David.

Despite these feelings, Judaism was a constant companion throughout my childhood and adolescence. My parents wanted their children to have a strong Jewish identity. We lit the Shabbat candles on Friday nights, went to synagogue on the High Holidays, attended Hebrew school twice a week, and were bar/bat mitzvahed at 13.

In the summer of 2015, two years prior to my New York move, I decided to backpack around Europe with my friend Ella the dream vacation for any young adult. But as I began my travels in Rome, the excursion became a personal reflection on the importance of Judaism in my life.

In each city, I was witnessing the aftermath of the decimation of Jewish communities in various European cities. This contrasted deeply with Toronto, a modern city that has a vibrant Jewish community. There are no visible scars of past persecution in my birthplace.

In Rome, Florence, Venice, Prague and Berlin I visited the Jewish quarters – neighbourhoods that once housed thousands but are now home to only so few. With each subsequent city I was learning about the history of Jewish persecution firsthand and how it manifested in modern day life. If the Holocaust never occurred, the Jewish population would be 25 million. Today it is 13 million, half of what it should be.

The extravagant architecture of the once greatly populated synagogues in Europe towered over the neighbourhoods. I had never seen synagogues that paralleled the awe and splendour of historic cathedrals. The stained-glass windows and intricate mosaic designs did not depict the resurrection and crucifixion of Jesus, but instead the stories of Jacob, Moses and Noah. It was indicative of a rich community, that occupied a prominent place in the city centre.

Rome's Grand Synagogue had a dominant presence in the main square, but now the Jewish presence in the city, like the synagogue's congregation, was a fraction of its former self.

In Florence, the synagogue had a rigorous security check due to anti-Semitic threats.

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In Venice, the Jewish quarter was home to four synagogues for the four Jewish communities – French, German, Spanish and Italian. Each synagogue had a distinct décor, reflective of each nation. For Spain, the fabrics, a deep red. For France, the decoration was in gold. Now, only one synagogue is operational.

It was in this Jewish quarter, as Ella and I sat in the courtyard underneath a tree, I decided to buy my Magen David necklace. At one of the store's window displays I saw a pendant with a mosaic flower design in the centre, encircled by a gold painted star. I would have glanced over it before, but as soon as my eyes rested on the object, I knew I had to wear it.

For the remaining week of my trip I wore the necklace as I walked through the Jewish quarter in Prague. In one of the buildings, tens of thousands of names in black type were printed on white marble walls. The names represented the thousands who had died during the Holocaust. As I walked through the room, I felt the cold star press into me as my eyes started to water reading the names of Jews killed in the city 70 years ago.

In Berlin I wandered through the Holocaust memorial, the concrete pillars slowly surrounding me until I was encased in their shadows. The memorial is in a bustling part of the city with the architect's intention being to integrate Berlin's past with the present day – a preservation of historical memory.

I stayed in that concrete maze for some time, feeling the burdensome weight of a history that is entrenched in tremendous suffering and resilience. I felt the presence of my ancestors who fled Lithuania because of religious persecution. I felt the weight of six million lives, a number so great I will never be able to fathom the loss.

The author in the Jewish quarter of Venice.

> *I realized my Magen David is an extension of my past experiences*

But I also felt the warmth of the Shabbat candles my family and I light every Friday night. I felt the happiness of familial togetherness during Passover and Hanukkah. And the warmth of childhood memories spread as my hand rested on my necklace.

In this moment, I realized my Magen David is an extension of my past experiences, my ancestors' past experiences, the Jewish experience, all which make me who I am today.

Since my trip, people often compliment the design of my necklace and other times it receives a glance on the subway or goes completely unnoticed. But it is always there, proudly felt by me. ■

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Resistance turns Marcel Marceau into an action star

MICHAEL FRAIMAN
mfraiman@thecjn.ca

The good thing about a movie suffering from a horrible first scene is that it tends to get better. This is true for the new Holocaust film *Resistance*, which opens on a happy Jewish family on the eve of Kristallnacht.

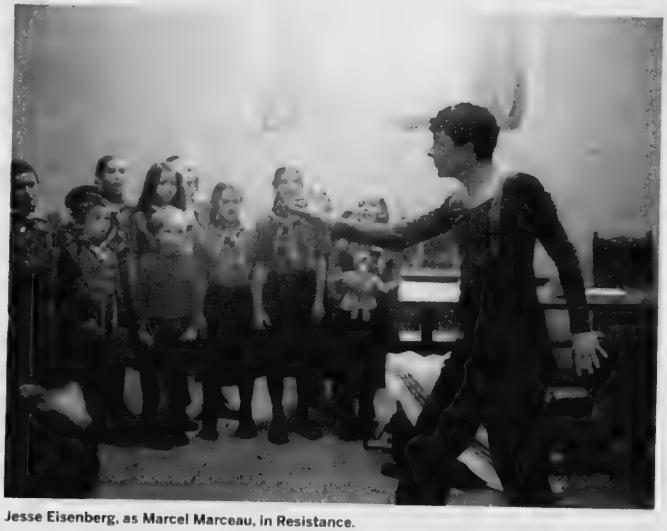
The first words of dialogue – this isn't really a spoiler, because we know what happened on Kristallnacht – come from the father finishing a bedtime story to his teenage daughter: "And they lived happily ever after!" Then the mother jumps in the bed and they all laugh for five seconds before the daughter asks why Germans hate Jews, and her father mumbles something about that not really being true, before Nazis barge in and murder the parents in front of the girl.

It's all terribly on the nose, and a really unfortunately blunt start to a film whose lead character dedicated his life to nuance. *Resistance* is about how Marcel Marceau, who later became a global icon of mime as an art form, joined the French Resistance and helped save thousands of Jewish children.

Because this is not actually a French movie, Jesse Eisenberg plays Marceau and everyone speaks English with vaguely French accents, except for the Nazis, who speak German. Given his meagre accent, it's convenient that Eisenberg – who is Jewish, at least, like Marceau himself – spends so much screen time performing mime acts.

Because it turns out Eisenberg is an excellent mime. The *Social Network* and *Zombieland* star fills the role well, and director Jonathan Jakubowicz, a Venezuelan Jew who rose to prominence in his home country in the mid-2000s, loves to keep the camera close on Marceau's hands as he shapes invisible balls and captivates young Jewish onlookers. Marceau made famous "the art of silence," which carries a double meaning here, as he and his compatriots spend much of the film in hiding. Ignore Eisenberg's feeble accent: his expressive facial tics, eyebrow raises and smooth gestures carry the show.

So this is not a verbal film, but a visual one, and Jakubowicz marks a clear style with bold cinematography and stark colours to distinguish this from other Holocaust stories. More than once, a wide-angle lens will swoop around Eisenberg, circling him twice while showcasing France's endangered colonial beauty. The eye-catching costumes, too, feel almost steampunk by design, emphasizing slim suspenders and bright sunglasses in a way that elevates the movie beyond its period setting.



Jesse Eisenberg, as Marcel Marceau, in Resistance.

And yet, inevitably, the actors will open their mouths again, reminding audiences that the dialogue in this film is plain bad, switching between cookie-cutter sentimentality and ham-fisted questions about morality. Most perplexing is the casting of second-billed Ed Harris, who literally appears on screen for no more than two minutes, bookending the film. He's ostensibly the narrator, telling Marceau's story to a group of soldiers – but then why doesn't he narrate the whole film? (Instead of spoken narration, written text fills in viewers about the social and political context.) It's a bizarre bit of casting and a waste of Harris's talent.

Then again, by the end, audiences may have already tuned out. The film devolves from character study to all-out thriller, as gun-toting Nazis chase Marceau and the children through the snowy Alps. I don't know if such a scene really happened. If it was in fact invented for the film, one wonders if Jakubowicz would have been better off taking a cue from Marceau himself and used silence, rather than action, to make a stronger statement. ■

Resistance is available on iTunes on March 31.

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What to tell the kids?

NORMAN RAVVIN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

'What should we tell the kids?' is a common refrain in troubled times. Children's writers and parents of young readers often encounter a related question: at what age is a child ready to read about subjects that paint a grim picture of human behaviour?

Ellen Schwartz's *The Princess Dolls* leads young readers into difficult terrain with its portrait of Canada during the Second World War. The novel is set in Vancouver in early 1942, and opens with a set of wartime concerns that are distinctly Jewish. The characters we get to know intimately are nine-year-old Esther, her brother Jake, their journalist father, and their home making mother whose baking is in demand at wartime fundraisers.

Alongside this family, Schwartz's novel focuses on that of Michiko, Esther's best friend. The wartime city is seen through the eyes of the two girls, offering a child's view of the wickedness taking place abroad alongside cruelties developing on the home front.

Esther and Michiko are captivated by a pair of dolls in a toy shop window – expensive, impressively-turned-out, porcelain-faced versions of the young British princesses Elizabeth and Margaret, whom they know from newsreel features at the neighbourhood theatre.

The dolls evoke Canada's genteel, time-honoured relationship with Britain and its early entry into war based on that cultural relationship.

Esther's family is haunted by relatives caught in Hitler's Germany, and the children learn, by stealthily listening to their parents' hushed voices, about the fate of German Jews in refugee internment and concentration camps.

The disaster the children witness, however, is homegrown, with the increasing dispossession followed by internment orders directed at British Columbia's Japanese community. Working age men are targeted first, followed by women and children like Michiko, many of them Canadian citizens with no personal relationship to Japan beyond an ancestral past.

For much of *The Princess Dolls* Esther and Michiko carry on almost as before these events. It is in the novel's final movements that Michiko's family is uprooted to be "resettled" in hastily outfitted cabins at Kaslo, in the B.C. interior. They leave behind a grocery store, which we see when Esther and her mother look in after its owners are gone. "The empty store," Esther thinks, "with cloths spread over shelves, felt like a dead place."

At Esther's school, children disappear: "Michiko's empty desk at school gave Esther a hollow feeling. She avoided looking at it, but her eyes kept being drawn in that direction . . . The next day, Noriko's desk was empty. A few days after that, Helen and George Nishi left. Then Yoko.

More empty desks.

Frank Sakamoto.

Mary Takenuchi.

By early April there were no Japanese children left."

The Princess Dolls does not aim to paint the full historical picture of these times. That would include the grim streetscapes of boarded up homes and businesses on Powell Street in the heart of the Japanese neighbourhood; the looting of these left-behind places; hundreds of fishing boats and family cars impounded and auctioned off at a fraction of their value; the indignity of a gathering point for uprooted families at the big livestock barns at Vancouver's east-side exhibition grounds.

These details are not in Esther's view, and the closest we come to them is through the provocative anti-government editorials her father writes for his newspaper in response to such actions.

The age of Schwartz's readers guides her portrait. She maintains a focus on family life, local street life and public schools, the things a primary school-age child or young teen would have experienced and understood most intimately.

The Princess Dolls is richly illustrated by Vancouver artist Mariko Ando. Her drawings run throughout the text in both full-page format and as decorative details. They follow the ingenious approach of Charles Schulz's way of drawing Charlie Brown – from the point of view of the kids, with parents and teachers largely off-screen. Adults appear in Ando's illustrations, but the world her images presents is much like the written world in *The Princess Dolls*, seen from a child's eye level.

An adult reader appreciates such decisions, while a youthful reader, possibly with the help of a teacher or parent, comes to understand what was done on the B.C. coast at the same time that Jews were being targeted across German-occupied Europe. ■

The Princess Dolls.
By Ellen Schwartz
Illustrated by Mariko Ando

Tradewind Books

Norman Ravvin is a writer and teacher in Montreal. His recent novel, set in Poland and Vancouver, is The Girl Who Stole Everything.

Mazel tov on your bat mitzvah, Leah! May you continue to grow filled with passion, sweetness, kindness, compassion and love in all you do. Love, Mami.

Happy 80th birthday wishes to Ann Sharpe (Wilder), beloved bubbe and, now, our dancing lady! Mazel tov from your loving family.

The author of the book, **'Lily's Tales', Lily Kovan** was born and raised in Tbilisi, Georgia.

The book is about her specific experiences and tales growing up in the former Soviet Republic.

With religious life and private enterprise flourishing even under the watchful eye of the Communist authorities, the Republic of Georgia was very different from the rest of the Soviet Union.

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Lily is available for speaking engagements. She can be reached at lily.kakosh1@hotmail.ca.

The book may be ordered on amazon.ca

PASSOVER FOOD

Passover meals for the whole day

JUDY BART KANCIGOR
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

As the old adage goes, eat breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince and supper like a pauper. But on Passover, which begins at sundown on Wednesday, April 8, with bread and flour forbidden for eight days, you've got to get creative.

Shakshuka, simmering eggs enveloped in a tomato stew, has become an Israeli staple and makes a hearty, satisfying choice for Pesach mornings. Starting out as a breakfast dish for labourers, "now there's hardly a restaurant in Israel that doesn't have shakshuka on the menu, or a home cook without a highly personalized version," writes Adeena Sussman in her hot new cookbook *Sababa*. "Shakshuka is a dish designed to make a cook look good. There's a forgiving, hard-to-mess-up sauce and a single-skillet presentation that's festive, yet overridingly casual. In our house, we often have a skillet of 'shak' sauce cooked and ready to rumble."

Sussman was nine years old when she first visited Israel. "At that time my idea of Israeli food was very basic," she told attendees at a luncheon/cookbook launch held last month at the Merage Jewish Community Center of Orange County in Irvine, Calif. "When you would come back from Israel people would say, 'How was the food?' and you would say, 'The hummus was excellent.' There was a lot of hummus, a lot of falafel, a lot of shawarma. That's really where Israeli food stopped for a long time. To say that Israeli food is having a moment is an understatement. This food has become really a part of the way we love to cook."

The transformation of Israeli food to the world-class cuisine it is today was gradual. "When I moved to Israel in the 1990s, I realized that Israelis cook seasonally, as we all do now, that produce is something you don't get in the supermarket in a clamshell or a plastic bag. It's something you touch and feel and talk to someone about. At that time the world was changing. Israel was becoming a wealthier country. People were traveling more and could explore every culture and every food. Israeli chefs were traveling all over the world and working in Michelin star restaurants in France and Germany and Italy. It used to be that the mark of a great Israeli chef was that he could cook a great French or Italian meal. But in California they were cooking seasonally – what grows together goes together. Israeli chefs said, 'We live in this tiny place. We have the best produce in the world, incredible cheeses, incredible olive oil, great wine. I'm going back to Israel to my own culture, my own cuisine.' That is how modern Israeli food developed."

"We are told that breakfast is the most important meal of the day," writes Paula Shoyer, in *The New Passover Menu*. "But on Passover, some would rather just sleep through it, as my kids often do. No toast, no bagels, no decent cereals and no oatmeal can add up to a grumpy family."

Not to worry. Shoyer has devised some tempting breakfast options in *The New Passover Menu*, including frittata with broccoli and leeks, gluten-free waffles or pancakes, fruit and nut granola and crumb cake muffins. "I have always viewed the holiday's dietary restrictions as challenges that can be overcome," she writes, "if you focus on the ingredients that you can use."

In our house, Passover breakfasts have always been the reason to wake up early for matzah brei, a Passover cross between pancakes and French toast. Mix crumbled matzah with eggs, and the variations are endless. My husband likes nothing but salt in his, but my sweet tooth craves the addition of berries or banana slices or chopped baked apple. And here's an idea. Leftover haroset (the dried fruit and nut mixture symbolizing the mortar used by ancient Jews when they were slaves in Egypt) from the seder makes a tasty (and crunchy) addition to your matzah brei. In fact, I make extra haroset just to save for breakfast.

Susie Fishbein, author of *Passover by Design*, told me by phone from her home in New Jersey about what she calls "the matzah brei wars" at her house. "With my husband behind one frying pan, my mom behind the other, they go head to head with soft matzah brei versus crunchy," she said. "It's always a deliciously hilarious battle."

For savoury matzah brei, Fishbein suggests adding grated onion, mushroom, and fresh herbs. Add cinnamon to a sweet version and serve with syrup, sugar or jam. "Whichever you choose, enjoy, and realize you are part of a culinary experience dating back generations." ■

Judy Bart Kancigor is the author of Cooking Jewish *and* The Perfect Passover Cookbook, *and can be found on the web at www.cookingjewish.com.*

PIXABAY PHOTO

Frittata with broccoli and leeks

- 45 ml (3 tbsp) extra virgin olive oil
- 2 leeks, white and light green parts only, cut into 1-cm (1/3-inch) thick slices
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 head broccoli, chopped into 2.5-cm (1-inch) pieces; about 500 ml (2 cups)
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) water
- 10 large eggs
- 125 ml (½ cup) milk (any kind)
- Salt and black pepper
- 125 ml (½ cup) shredded cheddar cheese

Preheat oven to 175 C (350 F). Heat 15 ml (2 tbsp) of the oil in large frying pan with 5-cm (2-inch) sides over medium-low heat. Add leeks and garlic; cook for 5 minutes, or until leeks are translucent. Add broccoli and cook for 5 minutes. Add water, stir and cover and cook for another 3 to 5 minutes, or until broccoli is almost fork-tender. Add remaining 15 ml (1 tbsp) oil and stir.

In large bowl, whisk together eggs, milk, salt and pepper to taste. Pour into pan and cook without stirring over medium-low heat until edges start to set, about 3 minutes. Sprinkle cheese on top. Place pan in oven, uncovered, and bake 15 to 17 minutes, or until set. Run a silicone spatula around edges of pan and flip frittata onto a plate, or scoop out slices. Serve warm.

Serves 4–6

Matzah brei

- 6 whole matzah peices
- 5 large eggs
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) milk
- 1 ml (¼ tsp) coarse sea salt or kosher salt
- 1 ml (¼ tsp) freshly ground black pepper
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) butter
- Confectioners sugar
- Raspberry jelly (or pancake syrup, applesauce or ketchup)

To make: Break matzah into 5-cm (2-inch) pieces (or smaller for a different texture). Place into large bowl. Pour very hot water over matzah; soak for 1 minute. Drain very well in colander, pressing out water. Return matzah to bowl.

In separate bowl, whisk eggs, milk, salt and pepper. Pour over drained matzah.

Melt butter in large non-stick skillet over medium heat. Add matzah-egg mixture and fry until golden brown, about 3 minutes on first side, 2 minutes on second side. Either flip in one piece by using a plate to turn it out or cut into pieces and turn separately.

Sprinkle with sugar and serve with jelly.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 44

Delicious desserts

RANDY FINGRUT
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

This Passover, as every other, preparing desserts, especially interesting baked desserts, can be quite a challenge. It is important to understand what makes Passover baking rise. Many Passover baked goods can be easily plumped up with whipped eggs and/or egg whites, so stock up on eggs. Eggs also can provide the protein necessary to give cakes and cookies some shape.

Make sure that the right fat is selected for every occasion. Butter can be used in Passover desserts as part of a dairy meal. For a meat meal, use kosher-for-Passover margarine, or vegetable oil. For flavour and richness, depend on chocolate.

Chocolate is the Passover baker's best friend. Unsweetened and semisweet pareve chocolate can be used to make countless chocolate creations and frostings. It also helps mask the taste of cake meal.

Use nuts, coconut and other flavors such as kosher-for-Passover jams, vanilla extract or the seeds from a real vanilla bean. Citrus zest is another great way to add flavor to Passover desserts. ■

Chocolate cupcakes with halvah

Even though the halvah is placed in the centre of the cupcake, during baking, halvah will peek out the top, like an embellishment.

- 225 grams (8 ounces) semisweet Passover chocolate
- 250 ml (1 cup) pareve margarine
- 6 eggs, separated
- 125 ml (½ cup) sugar
- 125 ml (½ cup) finely ground almonds
- 60 ml (4 tbsp) sweet Passover-wine
- 330 ml (1-1/3 cups) potato starch
- 200 grams (7 ounces) vanilla *halvah*, cut into 24 cubes

Preheat oven to 175 C (350 F).

Melt the chocolate and margarine in the microwave for 1 minute, stir until melted and set aside. With an electric mixer, beat the egg whites until stiff but not dry. In a larger bowl, beat the egg yolks and sugar until light and fluffy. Slowly beat in the chocolate mixture in a narrow stream. Add the ground almonds and wine, blending thoroughly.

Spoon beaten egg whites over the chocolate mixture. Sift the potato starch on top of the beaten egg whites. Using a rubber spatula, gently fold the egg whites and potato starch into the batter. Place paper cupcake cups in muffin pans. Spoon 30 ml (2 tbsp) of batter into cups, place *halvah* cube in centre and cover with batter until cup is about three quarters full. Bake for about 15 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in center comes out dry. Cool cupcakes before serving.

Makes 24 cupcakes.

Passover rainbow slices

Prepare powdered sugar for almond paste, then prepare almond paste. Wrap and place in the refrigerator until needed.

Passover powdered sugar

- 250 ml (1 cup) granulated sugar
- 7 ml (1½ tsp) potato starch

Mix and process until powdery.

Almond paste

- 175 ml (¾ cup) whole blanched almonds
- 410 ml (1-2/3 cups) Passover powdered sugar
- Egg whites of 2 large eggs
- 0.5 ml (1/8 tsp) kosher salt

Add almond flour, sugar and salt in the bowl of a food processor and pulse until evenly mixed. Add egg whites and pulse until a smooth paste forms. Roll into a log, cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate until ready to use. Almond paste can be prepared in advance and stored in the refrigerator for 10 days.

- 170 grams (6 ounces) blanched almonds
- 375 ml (1½ cups) white sugar
- 6 eggs
- 170 grams (6 ounces) almond paste, (recipe below)
- 250 ml (1½ cups) pareve margarine
- 175 ml (¾ cup) matzah cake meal
- 3 ml (¾ tsp) salt
- 5 ml (1 tsp) kosher-for-Passover vanilla
- Pink, yellow and green food colouring (about 8 drops each)

Glaze

- 340 grams (12 ounces) pareve dark chocolate
- 22 ml (1½ tbsp) vegetable oil
- Pinch salt

Filling

- 334 grams (12 ounces) cherry jam

Prepare three 23-by-30-cm (9-by-12-inch) baking pans by brushing them with vegetable oil and placing a piece of parchment paper at bottom. In a food processor, add sugar and almonds and pulse until they become fine crumbs. Combine in eggs. Add almond paste and combine. Add margarine, matzah cake meal, salt and vanilla. Preheat oven to 175 C (350 F). Divide batter into bowls in three equal amounts. Add green food colouring to the first, yellow food colouring to the second and add red food colouring to the third and mix until batter is evenly tinted.

Pour batters into prepared pans. Bake for 20 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out dry. Allow to cool completely.

Place chocolate, vegetable oil and pinch of salt in a glass bowl. Microwave for 60 seconds. Remove from microwave. Stir until smooth.

Place a piece of parchment paper on top of a platter or baking sheet. Add green cake layer to parchment paper. Spread with one half of the jam. Top with yellow layer. Add the remainder of the jam. Top with pink cake.

Carefully spread half the melted chocolate on top. Place in refrigerator for 15-20 minutes or until the chocolate is completely hardened.

Turn over the cake by placing a sheet of parchment paper on top and then invert another tray over parchment, hold trays together, then flip. Spread remaining chocolate on the other side. (Reheat chocolate mixture for 30 seconds, if necessary.)

Place back in refrigerator for 30 minutes. Wrap well once set.

Before serving, trim edges and with a sharp knife dipped in hot water, slice cake in half and then cut slices from each half.

Serves 12.

Parashah

Tzav | Leviticus 6:1-8:36

Rabbi Becca Walker reminds us to find constant reasons for gratitude
Chana Levi and **Tali Wercberger** compare seders and sacrifices
Rabbi Yoseph Y. Zaltzman aims to mirror the heavenly fire

Rabbi Becca Walker

This week, we have some unsurprising subject matter for the Book of Leviticus – sacrifices! Before you stop reading, bear with me for a moment. There is a lot we can learn from even the little details of these offerings. For example, there are lessons within the instructions for the *zevach shelamim* (sacrifice of well-being) and its three subcategories, the thanksgiving, vow and free will offerings (*todah*, *neder* and *nedavah*, in Hebrew).

The thanksgiving offering stands out, in that, in addition to the animal being sacrificed, the one bringing the offering must also bring different types of cakes. As well, the flesh from the thanksgiving sacrifice must be eaten that day and can't be left over, while the vow and free will offerings can be eaten over the course of two days.

We can learn an important lesson about gratitude from the immediacy with which the thanksgiving offering must be eaten. The sacrifice must be eaten right away, suggesting that giving thanks can't wait. With our world changing so much on a daily basis, our sources of inspiration can change just as quickly. This offering can be a reminder to find constant reasons for gratitude, helping us find hope and joy in our lives.

Midrash Vayikra Rabbah highlights the importance of giving thanks: "Rabbi Pinchas, Rabbi Levi and Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Menachem of the Galilee, 'In future (messianic) times, the observance of the sacrifices will be nullified, with the exception of the thanksgiving offering, which will never be nullified. All of the prayers will be nullified, with the exception of the prayer of gratitude, which will never be nullified."

In the future, this text says, there will be no need for sacrifices or prayers except for the ones in which we give thanks. That is how high the value of gratitude is. So let's take a moment – what are we grateful for now? Even in the midst of challenging times, the thanksgiving offering can inspire us to find small sources of joy. What are the everyday miracles in our lives right now? (Now go call a friend or family member and share!). ■

Rabbi Becca Walker is the engagement rabbi at Beth David B'nai Israel Beth Am in Toronto.

Chana Levi and **Tali Wercberger**

In this week's parashah, Tzav, we read about a conversation that ha-Shem had with Moses. Ha-Shem instructs Moses to command Aaron and his sons to offer a *korban* (sacrifice), namely, the *korban olah* (burnt offering).

The whole parashah is a step-by-step explanation on how to give the *korban*. The complex and repetitive instructions on how to give a *korban* are not written to trouble or confuse us.

A potentially deeper understanding of what ha-Shem was trying to illustrate to us suggests that each step given was a step to teach us to have a deeper understanding of our actions.

We always need to do our best to make sure we do things properly to fulfil the purpose of what we are doing.

In the case of the parashah, Aaron and his sons needed to do their best to satisfy ha-Shem with the *korban*.

In our day-to-day lives, in everything that we do, we need to consider on a deeper level what it is we are doing and how we can do our task with even better intentions or with an exceptional attitude.

This week is also Shabbat ha-Gadol, the Shabbat preceding Pesach. During this holiday, we sit at the seder table, remembering the story of the Jews leaving Egypt through a *seder* (order).

In many ways, the seder is similar to a *korban*. There is a specific order for the seder, just like there is an order for offering a *korban*.

One can learn from this that just like a lot of thought needs to go into each step of sacrificing a *korban*, the same applies to making a seder. We should always remember to put in the thought necessary to make our actions truly sincere and meaningful. ■

Chana Levi and Tali Wercberger are Grade 9 students at Ulpanat Orot, part of Bnei Akiva Schools of Toronto.

Rabbi Yoseph Y. Zaltzman

In the holy Temple, a fire would descend from heaven to consume the offerings that were brought upon the altar. Nevertheless, it was also necessary for the *Kohanim* (priests) to light a fire from below. Why were both necessary? To simply burn the offering, one fire would suffice. Obviously there was something else going on that necessitated a fire from above and below.

In general, any initiative on our part, whether spiritual or physical, elicits a reciprocal response from above. The altar was the meeting place between heaven and earth, between man and God. The fire from above was a physical, visible manifestation of infinite divine energy. Specifically, it was an expression of God's desire and passion for His people and their service.

What can we do from below that elicits or mirrors such a heavenly fire? We light our fire from below. We harness all our energies and passions, dedicating and directing them towards a higher purpose. We find a way for each characteristic, each trait, each tendency we have to become a divine offering.

Two of the interesting aspects about the fire on the altar is that it has to be constant and it has to be consistent in its intensity. That's why many Jewish rituals are governed by time and space, to keep them consistent. Especially during these isolated and troubled times, we need to strive to keep the inspiration alive, keep the spiritual fire burning within and to maintain as much consistency as possible.

Our personal altar fire is the enthusiasm with which we live our spiritual lives. Keeping this flame of enthusiasm constantly and consistently burning elicits God's infinite revelation in our lives – the supernatural success and blessing we desperately need today. May we merit to celebrate Passover together, and to experience these and other divine delights in the holy Temple – this year in Jerusalem. ■

Rabbi Yoseph Y. Zaltzman is the founder and senior rabbi of the Jewish Russian Community Centre of Ontario.

Social Scene

Jennifer Davidson assisting the chef

Howard and Esther Cooper

Richard Bennett, Adam Wygodny and Edward Nagel, board member

Culinary Discoveries

TORONTO

Technion Canada's sold-out event on January 30 featured interactive food stations, where chefs demonstrated how to prepare tantalizing dishes while describing the science behind the food. Guests enjoyed wine, food, and live music while learning about exciting food technology from the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, such as lab-grown beef, bee-free honey, and sustainable wine making. Over 130 guests were in attendance. ■

Dean Lurie, chair Toronto Council

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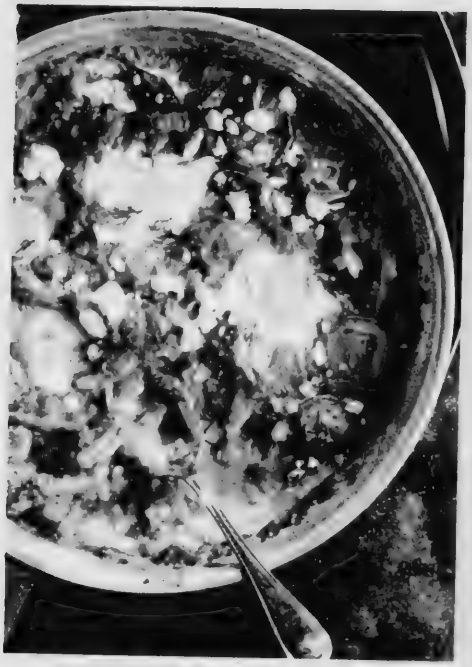
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 38



Zucchini, dill, and feta shakshuka

- ❑ 50 ml (¼ cup) extra virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling
- ❑ 1 medium zucchini, thinly sliced into rounds
- ❑ Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- ❑ 1 medium onion, finely diced
- ❑ 1 large red bell pepper, seeded and chopped
- ❑ 3 large garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- ❑ 45 ml (3 tbsp) tomato paste
- ❑ 5 ml (1 tsp) ground cumin
- ❑ 5 ml (1 tsp) sweet paprika
- ❑ 5 ml (1 tsp) ground coriander
- ❑ 1 ml (¼ tsp) cayenne pepper, or more to taste
- ❑ 6 medium very ripe fresh tomatoes, finely chopped by hand, or puréed in bowl of food processor if you like smoother shakshuka
- ❑ 1 can 411 g (14.5 oz) crushed tomatoes
- ❑ 1 small, fresh, finely diced red jalapeño, plus more to taste and for serving
- ❑ 1 ml (1/4 cup) chopped fresh dill, plus more for garnish
- ❑ 6 large eggs
- ❑ 250 ml (1 cup) crumbled feta cheese

To prepare: Heat 30 ml (2 tbsp) of the olive oil in large oven-safe skillet over medium-high heat. Add zucchini, salt and black pepper, and cook, not stirring too much, until the zucchini has released its water and is golden and slightly charred around edges, 3 to 4 minutes per side. Transfer to a plate.

Add remaining 30 ml (2 tbsp) oil to skillet, then add onion and bell pepper, and cook, stirring, until onion is lightly golden and softened but not too dark, 9 to 10 minutes. Add garlic and cook 1 more minute. Add tomato paste, cumin, paprika, coriander and cayenne, and cook, stirring, until mixture is fragrant and tomato paste is slightly caramelized, 2 minutes. Add fresh tomatoes, canned tomatoes and jalapeño. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to a simmer and cook until sauce has darkened and thickened slightly, 20 to 25 minutes; season with additional salt and black pepper to taste. During last five minutes of cooking, set rack in top third of oven, and preheat broiler.

Stir in dill and return zucchini to pan, stirring gently. With a spoon, form 6 wells in sauce, then crack an egg into each well. Sprinkle feta around skillet and cook 3 minutes.

Transfer pan to oven; broil until top of sauce is slightly caramelized and whites of eggs are just opaque but yolks are still runny, 2 to 3 minutes. With oven mitt, remove from oven, top with fresh chopped dill and more jalapeño, and serve immediately. After Passover, cool to room temperature and serve, sandwich style, stuffed into pitas or piled on top of bread.

Makes 4 servings.

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Rena Nickerson: Explaining SodaStream's appeal

RON CSILLAG
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Israel-based SodaStream has been a remarkable success story globally, but especially in Canada. Since 2010, SodaStream Canada has sold more than 1.8 million home carbonation machines, seven million gas cylinders and 9.5 million flavour mixes. The company's Canadian subsidiary, the fourth-largest globally, has experienced double-digit annualized growth for the past 17 quarters.

Canadians replaced approximately 300 million single-use bottles with SodaStream sparkling water in 2019 alone. The company sells 40 per cent of all sparkling water in Canada, making it the No. 1 brand in the category.

Rena Nickerson is the general manager of SodaStream Canada. She is active in the Toronto Jewish community, having served on the executive boards of several communal institutions.

Why are Canadians so enamoured of SodaStream?

Because of the success of the business and the environmental impact it has. The more we sell, the more plastic waste we save. The sustainability side is always interesting to people. The business success in Canada is pretty remarkable, and it's a great Israeli-Canadian success story as well.

We are still the No. 1 sparkling water brand in Canada, which is amazing. And we're also No. 1 in all small domestic appliances. The carbonator that powers the machine – that actually bubbles the water – sells five times more in units than the next top-selling item. Every year, we keep growing.

What drives the growth?

I think we're exactly what Canadians are looking for. They want to live healthier lives and drink healthier beverages. Hydration is actually the top resolution people make when talking about health and wellness. They want to drink more water, and it's easy to do that when you can make it any time you want at home, fresh. We know people are looking to help the environment, and this is a great way to do that for people who love sparkling water without a significant environmental impact. They don't see those bottles piling up in their blue bin.

Every reusable SodaStream bottle replaces up to 2,000 disposable bottles. In 2019, we saved approximately 300 million bottles from being produced in the first place.

The other thing we did in 2019 is to reduce packaging. We used to sell most of our cylinders in boxes. We made a commitment to move as much as possible out of those boxes. We are now down to 92 per cent boxless. Only eight per cent of our cylinders are sold in boxes. That's been in partnership with our retailers, who have enabled us to create other merchandising vehicles. As much as it sounds like a simple thing to reduce packaging, it actually touched almost everyone in the company.

A year ago, SodaStream opened a plant in Mississauga, Ont., to refill carbonators. How is it working out?

Since the fourth quarter of 2015, we'd had 17 consecutive quarters of strong double-digit growth, which is why we opened the plant. The plant was a sustainability enabler. We're taking about 200,000 kilometres of truck traffic off the roads because we used to fill the carbonators in New Jersey, and now we do it locally. We've also more than tripled our staff. When I started, we were 14 employees, and now we're about 50 in Canada, including office staff, plant staff and field sales.

The other thing that's necessitated the plant is distribution growth. We're now available in grocery stores, including Loblaws, and at Best Buy, where we didn't used to be available. We now have machines at Costco. Canadian Tire has been a longtime partner with us, as have Walmart, Bed Bath & Beyond and Kitchen Stuff Plus. They have experienced growth with us, even as we've expanded distribution.

Rena Nickerson

Talk about SodaStream's hiring practices in Israel.

We're proudly an Israeli company. On every machine that you buy, we have a little Israeli flag, and the copy under the flag says "Made in Israel. This product is produced by Arabs and Jews working side by side in peace and harmony." When you look at the makeup of the plant, generally, it's about half Jewish and half Muslim. And within the very diverse population, you have Jews from all around the world: Ethiopian Jews, Russian Jews, *sabras*, European Jews. Among the Muslims, we have Palestinians, Israeli Arabs and Bedouins.

The plant is called the Island of Peace. We treat everyone equally and fairly. That is just the right thing to do. And we've created an environment that's magical, where people who would never have otherwise met become friends. I was there about a year ago and attended the opening of a synagogue on the campus of the plant, as well as four Muslim prayer rooms. It was unbelievable. A rabbi, an imam and the Bedouin mayor of Rahat all spoke and celebrated the openings of their religious facilities, but also that we could coexist and that everyone could start to understand each other a little bit better. When I spoke to some of the people who actually worked the line, I asked, "What's it like to work at SodaStream?" And they just smiled and said, "We love it here because we've made friends with people we would never have otherwise met." We pay a very fair wage, and of course, we don't look at anyone's religion, ethnicity, nationality when we pay them.

SodaStream was a longtime favourite target of the BDS (boycott, divestment and sanctions) campaign against Israel. Is it still?

Not much. I've seen fewer and fewer instances, and those that I see are just not that material to the business. It doesn't spook us. Our retailers are very proud. They appreciate not just our growth, but that we're an ethical company. They stand behind that. You'll see a tweet now and then and it'll get retweeted a few times, and then it'll fizzle out. I think BDS activists are talking to themselves. ■

This interview has been edited and condensed for style and clarity

Sonny Goldstein, CFP
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The Jewish ballplayer who wasn't actually Jewish

MARK HEBSCHER

Did you ever hear the story of the Major League Baseball player who lied about his Jewish heritage?

No, he didn't deny it to avoid persecution and discrimination. He was actually a Jewish impostor, who made people believe he was a Member of the Tribe – and I don't mean the Cleveland Indians.

Charles Solomon "Buddy" Myer played 17 seasons in the majors, from 1925 to 1941. For 15 of those years, he played with the Washington Senators.

A cocky little second-baseman, he was a two-time all-star, who won the American League batting title in 1935 with a .349 average. (His lifetime average was .303.)

For this, he was chosen for the International Jewish Sports Hall of Fame.

But after reading his biography at the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR), I learned something new about Buddy Myer: he was actually a member of the Baptist Church.

As a kid, my grandmother gave me a copy of *The Jew in American Sports*. While originally written by Harold Ribalow in 1948, it was updated so many times that it remained a treasured bar mitzvah gift into the 1960s.

> *"[Buddy' Myer] made people believe he was a Member of the Tribe.*

And that's where I learned about how Myer struggled to combat anti-Semitism by brawling with known racist Ben Chapman, who would later torment Jackie Robinson and other blacks on the baseball diamond.

Myer, it seemed, was proud of his heritage and wouldn't take any guff about being Jewish. The story sounded exciting to me, since my ballplayer hero at the time was Sandy Koufax.

Reading the chapter, I wondered what life was like for a Jewish kid like Myer, who was born in the tiny town of Ellisville, Miss., and went on to star at nearby Mississippi State University. How did he handle the difficulties in a sport that was anything but tolerant of minorities?

At age 10, when I did a school project on Jewish athletes, he was a big part of it. After all, I had a reliable source – which turned out to be less than true.

While the Myers were originally German Jews, the family converted to Christianity in an earlier generation, and Buddy worried that correcting the record would be taken the wrong way.

Nonetheless, some of his actions on the diamond suggested Myer reacted unfavourably to anti-Semitic taunts, and he fought to defend his honour, and the honour of the Jewish People.

His teammates believed he was Jewish. The media reported it, too. And even if the Senators' management knew otherwise, he probably helped sell tickets to Jewish fans.

Myer never presented any public evidence that could dispute their belief.

So, if the all-time Jewish hit leader actually wasn't Jewish, then his 2,131 hits don't mean bubkes. Shawn Green, who had 2,003 hits between his 1993 debut with the Toronto Blue Jays, and 2007 retirement with the New York Yankees, can claim that statistic now.

But the assumption involving Myer wasn't the only story of its kind.

Wallace "Wally" Moses Jr. of Uvalda, Ga., was discovered, according to legend, by fellow Georgia native Ty Cobb, and played in the big leagues from 1935 to 1951.

A report from *The Sporting News* suggested that manager John McGraw dispatched a scout to meet this "Hebrew player," who could be a box-office draw for the New York Giants.

The speedy youngster of British descent was then quick to point out that, despite his biblical last name, he wasn't Jewish. And so, he spent his career in Philadelphia, Chicago and Boston instead.

Had he kept his lips sealed, who knows how things would've turned out for Wally Moses?

After all, he ended his major league career with 2,138 hits. Seven more than Buddy Myer. ■

Mark Hebscher hosts the podcast Hebsy on Sports, a steady source of stories just like this one.

Married with Kids

Freedom in the age of the coronavirus

Lauren Kramer

I was half asleep in a plane on the tarmac in Seattle when the pilot first alerted us that the world was changing fast. "Leave American soil right now and you may not be able to re-enter," he warned, just minutes before we were due to take off for Europe.

My daughter and I looked wide-eyed at each other. We'd been planning a trip to Cape Town via Europe for months and had an incredible itinerary outlined for the next two weeks. In the space of five minutes we had to decide whether to head north homeward or continue our journey towards the southern hemisphere.

I knew we should "deplane", as they say in airport-speak, but the imploring look on my kid's face faltered my conviction. "Let's just go," I told her, as we prepared for takeoff. Somehow, we'd make a plan to get back.

I was right about the plan, but its execution was much sooner than what I'd expected. Just 48 hours after landing we were packing our bags and rerouting our tickets home as Canada sent a chilling warning to citizens abroad to return while they still could. Over six days we spent some 60 hours in the air. But we were lucky to be able to return, and luckier still to get back uninfected and symptom free.

Lately, as the restrictions ramp up and our home confinement continues, I'm trying hard to focus on our good fortune. How lucky I am to have all my children home with me, back in our cocoon of family safety. Lucky that we can sit down to meals together, take some long walks by the river and be fully in the present, rather than rushing around to the various activities that otherwise fill our respective lives.

For the first time ever we have time on our hands to focus just on our homes and our family relationships. With almost nowhere to go except the store, the resources we have at home become our whole world: the games in our cupboards, the books on our shelves and the puzzles that have been gathering dust, untouched for years. Now is the time to get down to those hobbies we've always procrastinated, the cleaning projects long delayed and the books we've been meaning to read.

In a time when all normalcy has been disrupted, in some ways COVID-19 has given us the gift of time, and with it the opportunity to reflect on what really counts. The virus has stripped away our exercise regimens, our social obligations and our urge to shop for new, unnecessary things. What's left is screen time, remote work, virtual socializing and our own personal resources for keeping ourselves busy and entertained. Some of us will flourish with this freedom, others will wither under the pressure, particularly if and when the Internet crashes.

In some ways COVID-19 has delivered a prison sentence; in other ways, it promises a refreshing opportunity to focus without distraction. The prison shackles are hard to shake off. Like many, I'm finding it impossible to stay away from the news, and harder still to absorb and process the implications of its discouraging announcements. I go about my day with a knot of anxiety in my stomach, a constant web of worry that refuses to dissipate, no matter how hard I wrestle and reason with it.

But when I get outside, there's encouragement everywhere. Here in B.C., the buds of spring are forming in my backyard and the bald eagles are back, circling in the thermals and filling the sky with their calls. The river is writhing with bird life and the natural world is awakening after a long winter, preparing for the flourish of summer. The message it sends me is that we will get through this, it's just a matter of time. Normal life will resume, and when it does, this pandemic will become an old, distant memory we will mention with relief, glad to see the back of it. With any luck we won't be so complacent about normalcy ever again.

It's going to be a different Passover this year. As we spin through the haggadah singing songs with varying degrees of gusto, I know I for one will be focussing less on hekshers and more meaningfully on the plagues and the concept of freedom versus enslavement than ever before. ■

OBITUARIES AND RELATED NOTICES

STEELES MEMORIAL CHAPEL

York, Fay	March 17, 2020	Private
Klein, Elizabeth	March 18, 2020	Private
Savikin, Ida Morseevna	March 18, 2010	Private
Ilyaguev, Rosa	March 20, 2020	Private
Hoflich, Hedwig Heddy	March 22, 2020	Private
Friedman, Sally Rose	March 22, 2020	Private
Eisen, Helen	March 22, 2020	Private
Afterson, Ghidalia	March 22, 2020	Private
Gurvitz, Noam	March 22, 2020	Private
Morrison, Jean	March 23, 2020	Private
Green, Dolores	March 23,2020	Private

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BENJAMIN'S PARK MEMORIAL CHAPEL

Harry Klempfner	Mar 15/20	40 Rosehill Avenue
Abraham Fish	Mar 17/20	284 Upper Highland Crescent
Rosechelle Lipchitz	Mar 17/20	3575 Bathurst Street
Doreen Millman-Wilson	Mar 18/20	29 Michael Drive
Marjorie Collis	Mar 18/20	29 Rednar Road
Norman Savein	Mar 17/20	7300 Yonge Street
Gisella Robellini Braun	Mar 20/20	10 Trench Street
Raisa Sotenskaia	Mar 23/20	3174 Bathurst Street
Louis Robert Silverston	Mar 23/20	4005 Bayview Avenue
Maica Marin	Mar 23/20	205 Cummer Avenue
Renee Wolfson	Mar 24/20	33 Delisle Avenue

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HEBREW BASIC BURIAL

Stanley Lass	Mar 19/20	5935 Bathurst Street
Donna (Miller) Linden	Mar 20/20	110 The Esplanade
Alvin (Allan) Singer	Mar 22/20	4160 Bathurst Street
Veronica Glaser	Mar 23/20	320 Tweedsmuir Avenue

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The Officers, Board members, and global staff of JDC (the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee) mourn the passing of our long-standing, deeply admired and respected Board and Executive Committee member, Senator Yoine Goldstein z"l.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Elaine, Doron and Dahna, and their families at this difficult time. May they be comforted among the mourners of Zion, and may Yoine's memory be an inspiration and a blessing to all.

Mark Sisisky
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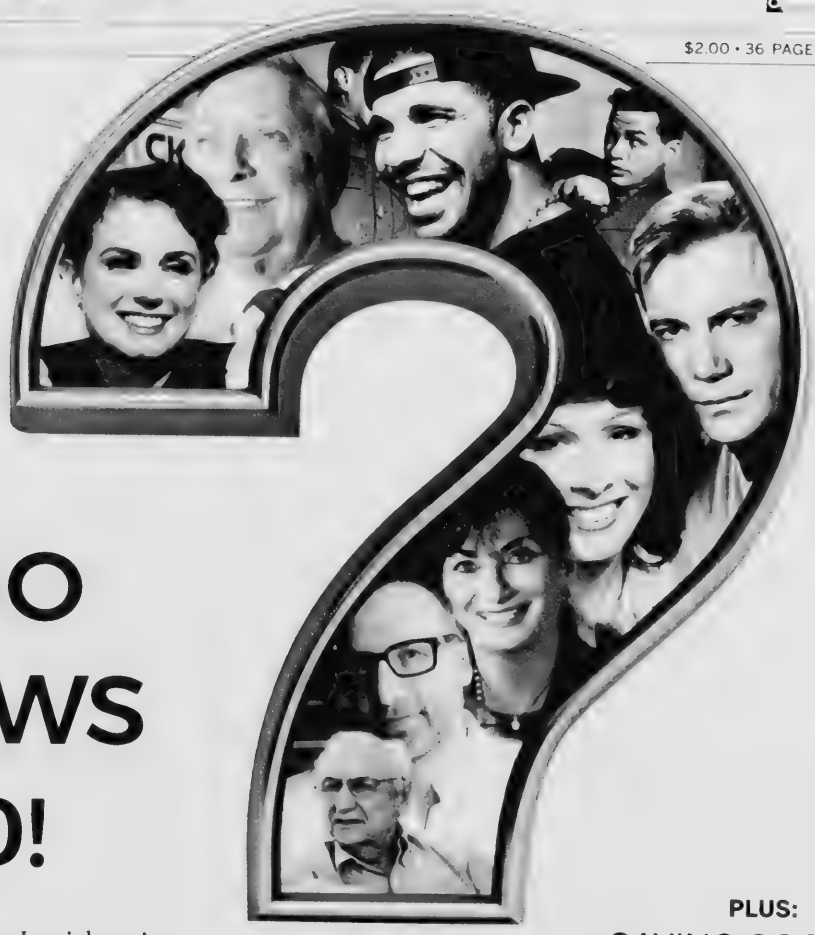

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PAGE 6

CANDLELIGHTING, HAVDALAH TIMES

Halifax	7:35 p.m.	8:41 p.m.
Montreal	7:16 p.m.	8:23 p.m.
Ottawa	7:25 p.m.	8:31 p.m.
Toronto	7:37 p.m.	8:42 p.m.
Winnipeg	7:57 p.m.	9:08 p.m.
Calgary	8:07 p.m.	9:20 p.m.
Vancouver	7:40 p.m.	8:50 p.m.

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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS

CJN

An independent community newspaper serving as a forum for diverse viewpoints
Publisher and Proprietor The Canadian Jewish News, a corporation without share capital

Quotable

> *The CJN suffered from a pre-existing condition and has been felled by COVID-19.*

—The CJN president Elizabeth Wolfe on announcing The CJN's shutdown. See page 6.

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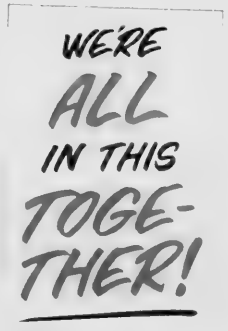
Trending

An awkward accusation of dishonesty

Toronto discount shop Honest Ed's, was the subject of an ethics battle amidst the coronavirus crisis. "We're all in this together!" posters, by an artist known only as Dreeem, got media attention for proliferating around the city. David Mirvish, who closed the family business in 2016, told the *Globe and Mail* that he was touched by the homage to Ed's in-house font. But the salute didn't sit as well with one of the former hand-painters, Wayne Reuben, who then teamed with a food bank to split proceeds from original pandemic-time signs, selling for $250. By contrast, Dreeem encouraged people to print out his version, or buy a print for $16, while admitting it was created by rearranging letters from a sign that hung at Honest Ed's.



Death of a power pop powerhouse

Adam Schlesinger, 52, who parlayed his teenage suburban New Jersey obsessions into an eclectic career, died on April 1 of complications from COVID-19. While one of his multiple bands, Fountains of Wayne, wrote character-sketch songs like the 2003 hit "Stacy's Mom," it was his Oscar-nominated theme for the throwback film *That Thing You Do!* that led to more writing for stage and screen, and producing a reunion of the Monkees. His work on *The Bedwetter*, a stage musical version of Sarah Silverman's book about her childhood, had its April debut delayed due to COVID-19.

The last gasps of the column

Like every other recurring feature in *The CJN*, this is the final printed iteration of Trending, where a big ambition for the past 2 1/2years was to take this newspaper to some unexpected places, while keeping the content as Canadian as possible. Without the top of Page 2, this newspaper might've never highlighted Toronto's infamous Chair Girl (after she fleetingly appeared in a rap video with Drake), covered as much news about emojis, memes and podcasts, or run photos of Jewish retro-television inspirations from Sid Dithers to Andrea Zuckerman. It's also the only way *The CJN* managed to get complaints for citing the *National Enquirer* as a source, or could accommodate as many tributes to *Mad* magazine. And hopefully, it gave you fodder for fun conversations. ■

Compiled by Marc Weisblott.

Gematria

6,163

The number of miles that sociology professor William Helmreich walked to cover every block of the five boroughs of New York City, which he wrote a book about. Helmreich died of COVID-19 on March 28, at age 74.

1,783

The number of days that Washington, D.C., Rabbi Barry Freundel spent in prison for secretly videotaping people in his synagogue's mikveh, until his release, which happened two weeks early on April 1, due to COVID-19.

3,145

The number of weeks that passed between the publication of the first weekly print issue of *The Canadian Jewish News*, dated Jan. 1, 1960, and the publication of this final print issue of *The CJN*, dated April 9, 2020.

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Letters to the Editor

A birthday to remember

March 24 was the 90th birthday of my great-grandmother, my Bubbe Ethel Stercz. My bubbe is a Holocaust survivor who survived Auschwitz. After all the harshness that she had to deal with during the Holocaust, my bubbe never thought that she would experience a pandemic, the one we all know of as COVID-19, that would lead to social distancing and self-isolation.

My bubbe is currently living at Baycrest's Apotex Centre, Jewish Home for the Aged. My family used to visit her weekly, and we had been looking forward to celebrating this amazing milestone with her. Sadly, as with almost every other public place, Baycrest is not allowing visitors. My family and I had to be creative and think of how we could celebrate this special occasion with her. After all, how many times in life does one get to celebrate a 90th birthday with their great-grandmother? All we wanted to do was make her happy and bring a smile to her face.

We found a way to surprise her and celebrate with her. We waited for her outside the Apotex building, in front of one of the windows, and she was able to come to the window from the inside of the building and see our posters, cards and the dance we performed for her.

Although we were not able to share hugs and kisses with her, we were able to celebrate with her and bring a smile to her face. We are so happy we could enhance this special day for her. We definitely made her birthday one to remember.

Shayna Katzman (one of Ethel Stercz's 13 great-grandchildren)
Toronto

The role of the rebbetzin

Last month, I was privileged to attend a talk called "Emulating Esther," which was given by four of my favourite rebbetzins (Rabbi 2 Rabbi, "Reviewing the role of the rebbetzin," March 12).

I am always inspired by these accomplished women's intelligence, insight, knowledge and wisdom, as well as their kindness and their eagerness to share and educate. I am also very impressed by how well they perform their extremely difficult role of rebbetzin while managing a second career, such as teaching or directing a Hebrew school, as well as a third career of rearing children (often a large number), running a household, etc. Each of these rebbetzins plays a very important role as spiritual and personal counsellor, liaison with the community, educator and role model.

Not everyone has what it takes to perform the challenging role of rebbetzin. We must certainly appreciate and value what they contribute. The rebbetzins I know certainly do emulate Esther.

Terri Sugar Keyfitz
Toronto

One more stop, virtually

We have just published a new virtual tour of Mount Zion, just outside the Old City of Jerusalem, a place sacred to Jews, Christians and Muslims ("Now's the time to travel to Israel. Virtually," cjnews.com).

Our website has a tour as well as an interactive map with short videos of people telling stories from their perspectives. Take a look at mountzion.org.il.

Merav Stein, Jerusalem Intercultural Center
Jerusalem

The CJN

You're already reading The CJN – now you can listen to it. The CJN Podcast Network delivers weekly audio shows straight to your smartphone, computer or tablet.

Here's what we're talking about this week:

Former NFL and Iowa State quarterback Sage Rosenfels joins the show to talk about the differences between being a Jewish athlete in rural Iowa compared to Miami, and more.

Listen to this and every other show on The CJN Podcast Network for free at cjnews.com/podcasts, or subscribe wherever you listen to podcasts.

Letters to the editor can be emailed to cjninfo@gmail.com. All letters must bear the sender's name, address and telephone number. We reserve the right to edit and condense letters.

COMMEMORATION OF THE HOLOCAUST

HASHOAH

Learn more: holocaustcentre.com/yom-hashoah

The National Holocaust Remembrance Day Ceremony, scheduled for Tuesday, April 21 is cancelled. Due to the COVID-19 virus, we truly regret that we cannot gather together for the Annual National Holocaust Remembrance Day Ceremony and the Ambassadors of Change program in our nation's capital. Thank you to all our organizational partners, presenters, speakers, sponsors, and vendors and as well as those who registered to attend for your ongoing support. Next year, we look forward to convening in Ottawa with our nation's leaders for this important annual event.

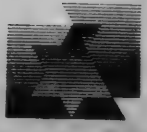
Canadian Society for Yad Vashem is pleased to announce that in partnership with the Azrieli Foundation, March of the Living Canada, the Sarah and Chaim Neuberger Holocaust Education Centre and Jewish communities and organizations across Canada, we will be co-presenting a cross-Canada digital Holocaust commemoration program. Be sure to tune into this historic event.

Fran Sonshine Jonathan Allen

Canadian Society for Yad Vashem
UJA Federation
Azrieli
March of the Living

When my husband died suddenly, my whole world stopped. I didn't even know where to begin with the arrangements. It was 2am. I called Benjamin's. To my surprise, Michael Benjamin himself answered the phone. They took care of every imaginable detail. They even had umbrellas for guests when it rained at the gravesite. I will never forget their wonderful care.

"They thought of everything."



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Rabbi2Rabbi

Making quarantine count

Sefirat ha-Omer helps us remember that each day matters and can be used productively by forcing us to be aware of the period we are in. By the same token, will we be able to say we used our time in isolation wisely?

RABBI DEBRA LANDSBERG
TEMPLE EMANU-EL, TORONTO

RABBI JOSEPH KANOFSKY
KEHILLAT SHAAREI TORAH, TORONTO

19th century Italian Omer calendar at the Jewish Museum in London WIKIMEDIA COMMONS PHOTO

Rabbi Kanofsky: In the days when your desktop was made of wood or Formica and your desktop calendar was two stacks of paper held together with a little metal coil, you would turn a page, literally, each day that went by to get to the next one. Each page would also indicate, in very small print, what number day of the year it was out of 365 (or 366), and how many days remained. If you paid attention to the small print, you realized that each day counted.

That's a tall order, so in Jewish life, we don't keep a running, day-by-day count. Instead, we count days at certain intervals. One of these intervals is *sefirat ha-Omer*, which occurs between Pesach and Shavuot. We count each day between the festivals as one of 49 in sequence, and we also count seven complete weeks, as the Torah commands. We do this to imprint on our consciousness that every day does, in fact, count on its own, and to motivate us to make it all the more so.

Rabbi Landsberg: Over the centuries, many Jews have engaged in mindful practices during the period of the counting of the *Omer*, each day presenting its own opportunity for self-reflection and self-improvement. I think that, this year, many more will be open to exploring what might have previously seemed to them an esoteric tradition. COVID-19 has many people looking anew at their lives, and the resonances between this ancient tradition and our current situation abound.

Sefirat ha-Omer connects the physical freedom of Pesach and the Exodus with the spiritual freedom of Shavuot. Today, with restrictions on our physical freedom, we are seeking out new ways to spiritually connect and grow. Self-isolation and quarantine intensify our awareness of how precious freedom is and how we must choose whether we fill our days with higher meaning or simply "kill time."

It's interesting to remember how closely *sefirat ha-Omer* is associated with a plague. The Talmud teaches that it was the result of Rabbi Akiva's students not treating each other with respect, and it is in remembrance of the ensuing tragedy that weddings are forbidden during this window of time. Today, during another time of "plague," the question of how we interact with one another has risen anew. Synagogues and other communities have closed their doors "out of an abundance of caution" – our current language for treating others with utmost respect and care.

Rabbi Kanofsky: On the face of it, counting the *Omer* heightens the anticipation leading up to Shavuot. In *A Spiritual Guide to the Counting of the Omer*, Rabbi Simon Jacobson draws on the mystical implications of the practice as a means to giving one insight and exercising self-refinement during this period, which is really the higher, deeper calling of *sefirat ha-Omer*.

A few years ago, U.S. Sen. Joe Lieberman published an *Omer* manifesto for the politically inclined, and there are now a number of spiritual guides available to help people through the 49-day period. Meanwhile, many people study Tractate Sotah during the *Omer*, as it has 49 pages, creating a kind of mini *daf yomi*.

The opportunity is there to make each day count. And that's precisely the sort of inspiration that applies to our entire quarantine period, however long it lasts. At some point when we look back on it, will we say, "I really made something special and positive of every day!" or "I watched everything on Netflix."

Rabbi Landsberg: I think many people would feel a greater calm if they knew how long the "shelter in place" order will last (even if it were to be 49 days). Yet, the spiritual impact of quarantine and *sefirat ha-Omer* can be the same: we can no longer take life for granted.

The structure of a daily count during this window of time – both *sefirat ha-Omer* and COVID-19 – can strengthen what should be a normal awareness. Conscientiously tending to what and who matters is something we should make time for every day of the calendar year.

Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav pointedly asked, "If you are not going to be better tomorrow than you were today, what need do you have for tomorrow?" May we all be blessed with many more tomorrows, and may we make them for the good. ■

THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
CJN

It is with tremendous sadness that we say goodbye
to our readers in this, the last edition of The CJN.

We thank our subscribers and our advertisers for your support.

We have been proud to serve our community and regret that
we are unable to continue to do so in this time of need.

We are grateful for all the messages of
condolences we have received.

We wish you well.

WISHING YOU A SAFE AND HEALTHY PASSOVER.

from the

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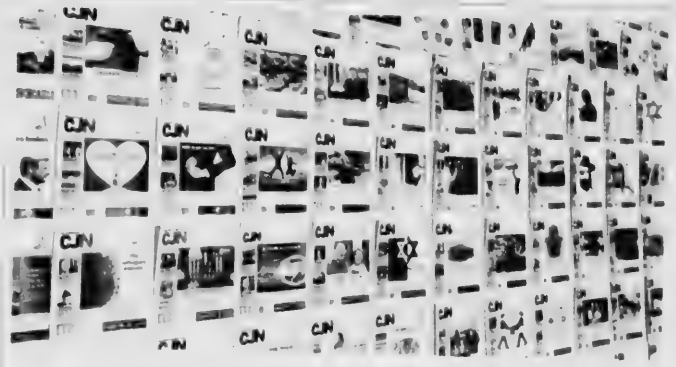
A bitter first: saying goodbye



There have been a lot of firsts in my life over the past seven years. Tops among them are undoubtedly the births of my two children. But a close second was the call I got one evening a little over six years ago. "Are you interested in being the editor of *The Canadian Jewish News*?" the speaker inquired out of the blue.

"Yes," I responded incredulously.

Pretty much everything since that moment has, at least professionally speaking, been a first for me – first time as an editor-in-chief, first time as a regular columnist, first time running a newsroom, redesigning a publication and a website, first time getting creamed on social media for something I wrote or said (though interestingly enough, not the first time being heckled in shul), my first grey hairs. The list goes on. And now we've arrived at another: my first last "From Yoni's Desk."

I have a lot to be thankful for, and plenty of people to thank. First, to Elizabeth Wolfe and *The CJN*'s board of directors, who took a big risk when they hired me to reimagine a Canadian Jewish institution. They were there to nurture and help me when I needed it, and otherwise left me to my own devices. As an editor, you couldn't ask for anything better than that.

When I started this job, I was concerned that the staff, some of whom had been with the paper for decades, and all of whom had just been through its near-death, wouldn't buy a 33-year-old with zero management experience running their baby. But they welcomed me with open arms. It's been a privilege to share in your work, in your family.

Maybe it would be a bit easier saying goodbye to so many great colleagues if we could at least be together in the office, reminiscing about the good times, kibitzing as we toast one final edition off to the presses. Instead, we're winding things up on Facebook Messenger and Zoom. It's not sufficient to express the emotions of the moment, but that's all we've got for now. Perhaps it'll make it all the more special when we are finally able to get together again in person. I'm looking forward to that (and will bring the scotch).

One of the things people tend to confuse about journalists is our perceived power. The truth is: we have little, if any. That force actually lies with readers. So, to the tens of thousands of Canadians who have subscribed to *The CJN* for decades, *todah rabah* on behalf of the hundreds of people who have worked here over the years. Without you, our work wouldn't have mattered.

As a thank you for keeping us on our toes all these years, we will be sending print subscribers a parting gift this spring (assuming the world doesn't end first) – our inaugural book, *Northern Lights*, an illustrated history of Canadian Jewry. I hope you'll enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

I am gratified that, at the time of its closure, more people are reading, engaging and interacting with *The CJN* than ever before. Our online presence has grown leaps and bounds in recent years, we just launched a handful of new podcasts and our CJN Today newsletter has been attracting a steady audience. The interest is definitely there.

Canadian Jews need a national publication to call our own, whether that's *The CJN* or something else. I trust that when the dust clears, we will have one. And if I have a part to play in it, I look forward to speaking with you again.

Until then, *lehitraot*. ■ — YONI

Everything has its season. It is time

Elizabeth Wolfe

Everywhere we have seen the devastating impact of COVID-19. It has attacked every aspect of life as we know it, and we are all struggling to cope with the upheaval. We had hoped that *The CJN* could play some small role to inform, console and distract our readers as we all isolate at home, worried about our families, our friends, our medical caregivers, all those risking their lives to provide essential services, our businesses and livelihood, our community, our country, our world.

It is with great regret that we have realized that we will be unable to do so. Unfortunately, we too have become a victim of COVID-19. Already struggling, we are not able to sustain the enterprise in an environment of almost complete economic shut down. It is with deep sadness that we announce the closure of our beloved *CJN*, both in print and online.

In the spring and summer of 2013 we saved *The CJN* from its announced demise. At that time, I consulted with a number of community leaders, including my mother, Rose Wolfe, a longtime board member of *The CJN* and community leader. Her response at the time surprised me. She said: "It had a good run. Everything has its season. It is time."

> *Despite the challenges facing print journalism everywhere, we managed to survive*

That response did not sit well with me, as I was not satisfied that we had done everything possible to save *The CJN*, especially given our family's 40 year association with the paper. I was not willing to give up without another try. With the support of the board of directors, we re-organized, restructured and created a new version of the paper and website to serve the Canadian Jewish community.

Against all odds, our friends, advertisers and readers recognized how important it was to maintain *The CJN* as a platform to inform and engage Canadian Jewry.

The outcry at the time encouraged our efforts. It did not, however, translate into widespread support for *The CJN*, although our dedicated subscribers, advertisers and friends kept us afloat. Despite the challenges facing print journalism everywhere, we managed to survive, printing 100 editions (50 each in Toronto and Montreal) annually as well as supplements and periodic magazines, and providing digital access through our website.

We have not been immune to the decline of the industry, although our decline has been slower than most. Our bottom line showed small profits early on, to start to rebuild our lost reserves, became barely break-even shortly thereafter, and then recently succumbed to increasing losses. The economic devastation striking our community has also affected *The CJN*. *The CJN* suffered from a pre-existing condition and has been felled by COVID-19.

Our board of directors and management agree that, while we are committed to our community and our readers, our first obligation is to our staff, many of whom have been with *The CJN* throughout their careers. On behalf of all our readers, I want to extend an enormous thank you to all of *The CJN* staff who have provided Canadian Jewry with a much needed connection to community.

I have no doubt that there will be another outcry from the community, particularly from those readers who rely on the print edition as their source of information, and perhaps, their connection to the Canadian Jewish community. It is my hope that members of our community will recognize the need for a national platform and that a new *CJN* will emerge.

Please know that we have done everything in our power to continue *The CJN* for as long as possible. It is with tears in my eyes that I conclude: It had a good run. Everything has its season. It is time. ■

Elizabeth Wolfe is the president of The Canadian Jewish News.

Essay

Be true to the voices from the past

Eli Honig

In 2009, I was asked to address a small workshop at TanenbaumCHAT on Yom ha-Shoah. In the weeks leading up to it, though I couldn't really articulate my reasoning, my mind had been turning to a poem that I had first encountered in high school: Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." Why would that poem, perhaps written under the influence of opium but certainly featuring Christian theological overtones, have insinuated itself so profoundly on me leading up to that day?

To try to explain why it might be relevant, I started by reading a few verses.

"It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
'By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?"

An ancient mariner, an old sailor, buttonholes a man who is on his way to a wedding. The man is late for the occasion, and certainly doesn't have time to listen to the talk of an old, deranged, man.

"The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,
And I am next of kin;
The guests are met, the feast is set:
May'st hear the merry din.'
He holds him with his skinny hand,
'There was a ship' quoth he.
'Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!'
Eftsoons his hand dropt he."

But the Mariner persists, with a story that starts off innocently enough as he and 200 other sailors set sail.

"The wedding guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright eyed Mariner."

The ship goes off course into southern Antarctic waters. It encounters an albatross, a large bird, that leads it back out. But then the Mariner shoots and kills the albatross with a bow and arrow. The weather changes, the ship goes off course again, and things turn dreadful.

"Water, water everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink."

One by one the sailors die.

"Four times fifty living men,
(And I heard not sigh nor groan)
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropped down one by one."

Only the mariner lives on.

"The many men, so beautiful!
And they all dead did lie;
And a thousand thousand slimy things;
Lived on; And so did I."

• • •

How many times have I heard, "My entire family perished in the Shoah. Why did I survive?" My mother used to ask why she survived. And though she, her three children, and her six siblings miraculously were spared, her husband - my father - and his entire family were taken to Auschwitz and perished. As did her father, who was forced to dig his own grave together with all the other Jews of Brzozow.

I have often asked myself this unanswerable question, though as a hidden infant, I could not bear direct witness to the unbearable suffering and horrors that engulfed millions of others. And yet it has haunted me ever since I can remember.

Der Alte Matrose by Gustave Doré

When I was in college, a close friend of mine once told me to bury the dead, which one must surely do if one can. Physically, most of them were not buried, and they keep turning up for me at unexpected times and places. I imagine in my mind's eye that the dead would surely admonish us if we only focused backwards - if we were paralyzed by introspection. By the same token, I can't imagine that they would be comforted by our just trotting them out once a year.

A partial answer to my mother's question came to me slowly as I prepared to speak at a breakfast in 2011 upon my retirement as a teacher after 31 years.

I hear a cacophony of voices from the distant and recent past, all clamouring to be heard - the voices of rabbis and heretics, of the pious and the impious, of Zionists and Bundists and skeptics, of young and old.

They all want to have a legacy. And it is in the give and take of Jewish children arguing about a difficult talmudic passage, in students cutting their teeth, so to speak, as they attempt to express themselves in Hebrew. It is about engaging with our forefathers and mothers and prophets and kings and heroes and heroines and scoundrels in Tanakh, as well as in tracing our heritage from ancient caravan routes to the present day. From the Exodus from Egypt to the building of the Temples, to their destruction, to exile to mass migration... and the list goes on and on.

Without a strong sense of our past – not a superficial one – we are lost. We have no future. I have no future.

Each Jewish child represents multiple voices from the past, and in each of them is the seed of our future, of the future of my father, and so many others whose bones were burnt in Auschwitz and other horrendous places.

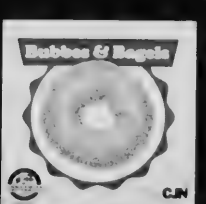
Please be true to these voices from the past. They represent our eternal spark.

I'm not an ancient Mariner,
Though ancient I might be.
And by my short grey beard,
I don't stop one of three...

And yet my tale keeps haunting
So difficult to tell, and daunting.
It must be told as I get old
For a future that's not wanting. ■

Eli Honig taught physics at the Anne and Max Tanenbaum Community Hebrew Academy of Toronto for 31 years, and for longer than that at the University of Toronto.

The CJN Podcast Network



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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
APRIL 9, 2020

A DIVERSION IN DIFFICULT TIMES

Test your knowledge of Canadian Jewish trivia with 100 questions that may stump you

BILL GLADSTONE
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

1. What wartime Canadian novel dealt centrally with Jewish characters and themes and won a Governor General's Award?

2. What Canadian novel uses the Christie Pits riot of 1933 as a pivotal event in the story?

3. Who was the first documented Jew in what would become Canada?

4. Who leads you to the river "wearing rags and feathers from Salvation Army counters?"

5. What prominent philanthropist was born in Minnedosa, Man., built a single television station into a national TV network, and was instrumental in founding the Winnipeg-based Canadian Museum for Human Rights?

6. This Canadian served as an official war artist in the Second World War and was profoundly affected by what he saw in the Belsen concentration camp.

7. She was born in Niagara Falls and went on to become a legendary host for CBC radio and TV.

8. He once joked that the CBE (Commander of the British Empire) medal he received from Queen Elizabeth actually stood for "Creator of Bargains Everywhere."

9. Who said, "A man without land is a nobody?"

10. They once wrote a skit titled "Rinse the Blood Off My Toga", about a Roman private eye attempting to solve the assassination of Julius Caesar.

11. His magnum opus, *Torah: A Modern Commentary* (1981), was almost 1,800 pages long and 18 years in the making.

12. His works in Toronto include the Balfour and Tower Buildings on Spadina, the former Primrose Club on Willcocks, and the former Beth Jacob Synagogue on Henry Street.

13. The daughter of a famous cantor, she became Toronto's first Jewish woman doctor.

14. Known as "a big man with a big heart," he (and his brother) built up their Spadina Avenue in Toronto delicatessen into a multi-million-dollar enterprise.

15. This Israeli-Canadian writer wrote *The Best Place on Earth*, an award-winning collection of stories, and a compelling memoir, *The Art of Leaving*.

16. As Toronto's first Jewish mayor, he oversaw and approved plans for the New City Hall.

17. He has written about the Russian-Jewish émigré community of north Toronto in several acclaimed novels and short story collections.

18. His famous detective, Benny Cooperman, was described in the *Globe and Mail* as "the country's first truly Canadian detective hero."

19. This Montreal poet-novelist greatly influenced Leonard Cohen, Irving Layton, Miriam Waddington and others; also wrote speeches for Samuel Bronfman.

20. A historic plaque marks the Spadina Avenue apartment in Toronto where this notorious American anarchist lived for a while.

21. This Winnipeg-born writer's debut novel won a Governor General's award, but despite phenomenal success and encouragement she didn't produce a second novel for another 18 years.

22. This legendary London-born adventurer grew up in Western Canada and became a major-general in China's nationalist army battling the Communists in the Chinese Revolution.

23. Polish-born Montrealer who became a literary sensation when two of his Yiddish novels were published in English translation in 1985.

24. She wrote the hit song that propelled a young unknown singer named Frank Sinatra to stardom.

25. Toronto-born female correspondent whose singular newspaper reports revealed the horrors of Stalin's Soviet Union, and later Hitler's Germany, to the world.

26. Lachine-born writer who later moved to Chicago and entered the top ranks of American novelists.

27. This writer, famous for his tales and poems of California frontier life, was descended from a prominent early Jewish family in Quebec.

28. Comic-book artist, born in Toronto, who created the iconic Superman superhero with a friend.

29. Toronto-born architect who designed the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, the AGO in Toronto, and many other iconic buildings.

30. This head of a major American film studio was raised in Saint John, N.B.

31. This powerful Hollywood film mogul was born in London, Ont., in 1892.

32. Canadian-born film director, responsible for *The Out of Towners, Love Story, Plaza Suite, The Man in the Glass Booth* and other popular movies.

33. Cinematic master of the macabre, the bizarre, and the schlocky.

34. Hollywood producer who scored a string of lucrative hits from the late 1970s to the 1990s, and was instrumental in building the TIFF Lightbox in downtown Toronto.

35. Creator of the long-running American TV show *Saturday Night Live*.

36. He played wise Pa Cartwright family in the classic TV western, *Bonanza*.

37. "Beam me up, Scotty."

38. Host of *Let's Make a Deal*.

39. Actor and stand-up comedian who first attained prominence as a doctor in the TV medical drama *St. Elsewhere*.

40. Band leader on the *Late Show With David Letterman*.

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BUY A LETTER,

SAVE A LIFE!

Feeling Hopeless? You're not alone!

It is, no doubt, a frightening time for all. As Coronavirus ravages our cities; fears of contamination (of ourselves and others) and practicing social distancing make us feel especially limited in our response. We want to do something. But what?

This is not the first time in history that a community was faced with such a terrifying challenge In 1752, the town of Mezibush was afflicted with a rampant and extremely contagious disease In that time of incredible fear and uncertainty, The Baal Shem Tov was approached by community leaders with the request to pray on behalf of the town in the hopes that he would succeed in banishing the disease from their midst.

The Baal Shem Tov replied that the salvation was not to come through him. Rather, he suggested that the community join together to write a Torah Scroll. They immediately leapt into action. As the quill moved across the parchment, filling the scroll with the holy words, the community miraculously began to heal. From then on this special Sefer Torah was referred to as 'The Miracle Worker'.

Now, you have the opportunity to join in a similar project.

In light of this global pandemic, Jewish community leaders are drawing inspiration and strength from the Baal Shem Tov. They have initiated the writing of a Torah Scroll in the merit of a speedy and complete recovery of all those affected.

Over 80,000 individuals have already partaken in this incredible initiative. Each letter is purchased by another Jew, binding everyone together in a singular scroll, a massive display of Jewish unity.

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Israel's Arab citizens lose out in political shift

Rabbi Dow Marmur

Fifteen of Israel's 120 members of Knesset represent the Joint List, a coalition of four Arab political parties – liberals, Islamists, progressives and ultra-nationalists – that came together to make sure that the law passed in 2014 raising the electoral threshold from 2 per cent to 3.25 per cent wouldn't disenfranchise them.

A major impetus for passing the law was probably to exclude as many Arabs as possible from the Israeli legislature. The move misfired. Today, there are more of them than ever before.

The Joint List had supported Benny Gantz, the leader of the now broken-up Blue and White party, when he hoped to become the next prime minister of Israel. After the election on March 2, he seemed to be able to muster 61 members of Knesset and was, therefore, given the mandate by Israel's president to form the next government. The Joint List wouldn't be part of it, but it expected measures to benefit Israel's Arab citizens, whom previous governments are said to have neglected.

For a few days, I was among those who thought that Ron Kampeas' observation in the *Times of Israel* – that "an Arab voice at the national table has taken a leap from unimaginable to inevitable" – was correct. Unfortunately, Gantz taking a section of Blue and White into the coalition of right-wingers supporting Benjamin Netanyahu has rendered this assessment irrelevant.

Netanyahu, who is likely to remain the prime minister in the foreseeable future, insists that the Joint List lacks legitimacy because its Knesset members oppose the Jewish state and some of them are accused of supporting terrorists.

Responsible and respected public figures in Israel were understandably outraged by the prime minister's stance. Efraim Halevy, the former head of the Mossad, wrote in *Haaretz* that he who seeks to ignore the Joint List also invalidates those who voted for them – that is, Israel's Arab citizens, almost 21 per cent of the country's population.

Arabs are productive and, in some cases, prominent members of Israeli society. Their role in the country's health service is particularly notable. Prof. Rafi Walden, the deputy director of Tel Aviv's Sheba Medical Center, has put it well: "It is hard to comprehend that a patient can put his life in the hands of a senior cardiac surgeon who is Arab, while the prime minister overwhelmingly defines the Arab citizens of Israel as terrorists."

At this time of the coronavirus pandemic, Walden's words are particularly poignant: "The system would collapse without the crucial contribution of the Arab citizens as medical staff." Writing in *The New Yorker*, Prof. Bernard Avishai reported that "17 per cent of Israel's physicians, 24 per cent of its nurses and nearly half its pharmacists are Arabs."

An item on Facebook put it succinctly: "I am an Arab doctor. I voted for the Joint List. I am not a terrorist. I keep working to save lives of Jews and Arabs equally. Shared fate, shared government."

Wishing to share the fate of Israel's Jewish citizens, Arabs were therefore outraged by a proposal in U.S. President Donald Trump's so-called peace plan – an idea long advocated by reactionary Jews in Israel – that a region in the north of the country, largely populated by Arabs, be made part of the Palestinian state. Israel's Arabs justifiably see themselves as citizens and wish to remain so, even if many may oppose Zionism.

The coronavirus crisis has also brought to light the gap in available medical and other welfare services between the Arab and Jewish population in Israel. Had Gantz formed a government with the support of the Joint List, that gap would no doubt have been narrowed. As things are now, however, Arabs will continue to be marginalized and the Joint List will remain as their foremost advocate.

But it won't be alone. Soon after the announcement that Gantz wouldn't form the next government, a statement reflecting the views of many Israelis affirmed solidarity with their fellow Arab citizens. Perhaps they'll help to bring about what Gantz failed to do. ■

Making this awful moment more tolerable

Benjamin Shinewald

"Every hour is unique and the only one given at the moment, exclusive and endlessly precious," wrote Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel.

And yet, how much we would give for these hours to pass more quickly.

We sit, cooped up, waiting for time to pass, worrying for our loved ones and ourselves and longing for human connection. We alternate between joy and anger, between hope and despair. A new, intense mood can suddenly overtake us, displacing the last completely.

Time, it seems, has become our enemy, as much as coronavirus.

But as Heschel shows, how we spend, mark and sanctify time is core to Jewishness. It may yet be our way to keep our sanity in a moment when days blur into weeks.

What did you do last Tuesday? I have no clue and you probably don't either. Tuesdays used to be the days where we had our team meetings at the office and where, once a month, I'd attend Ve'ahavta board meetings. But today, Tuesday is no different than Thursday or even Sunday. Time is all the same.

Except that, I know precisely what I did Friday and Saturday. Last Friday night, our family, spread across Chicago, Toronto, Vermont and Winnipeg gathered by video to light candles and sing Shabbat songs. Grandparents saw grandchildren, cousins waved to each other and all of us smiled. It was a precious moment of pure joy, just as welcoming Shabbat should be.

We couldn't have had the same experience on a Tuesday. Even now, when we have nothing but time, we may not have bothered. The absence of the Shabbat ritual might have made a Tuesday video call feel artificial.

Once Shabbat ended, the online Havdalahs began, and never did the beginning of a new week seem as significant. Shuls and schools and other wonderful Jewish institutions lived their core purpose to the fullest: strengthening our community, even (or especially) in this moment of physical distancing, this time just doing so online.

It may feel like physical distancing is about time, but of course it is entirely about space. Heschel contrasts Judaism's approach to time with humankind's approach to space. "The mythical mind would expect that, after heaven and earth have been established, God would create a holy place." But, Heschel notes, the Torah first applies the word *kadosh* (holy) to time – to a day called Shabbat.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

> Days that are truly indistinguishable seem much more imprisoning than physical distancing.

Today, Jews use time – how we mark it, how we sanctify it – to break through the spiritual void that is physical distancing. You see this in videos of Israeli apartment dwellers singing Shabbat songs together on their balconies, in well-wishers communicating holiday greetings online and in many other ways.

I write this before Passover, before my family's first-ever virtual seders. The idea, preposterous a month ago, immediately lifted our spirits, giving everyone something to look forward to (and dress up for) and alleviating the fear of spending Passover alone.

For others, the very notion of an online seder is contradictory, given Judaism's prohibitions against electricity on holy days. But even the more observant will be calling each other just before and immediately after the holy days. This, too, is a deeply Jewish expression of time.

Imagine, now in particular, if you really did treat every single day identically – if you didn't separate the holy and the secular, or however you describe it, by somehow marking Shabbat or Passover or anything else in our Jewish cycle. To me, days that are truly indistinguishable seem much more imprisoning than physical distancing.

Heschel reminds us that, "Judaism teaches us to be attached to holiness in time, to be attached to sacred events, to learn how to consecrate sanctuaries that emerge from the magnificent stream of a year."

We may not realize it, but through marking Jewish moments in time, we all consecrate those sanctuaries in our own way and, in so doing, we make this awful moment a bit more bearable. ■

Do you disagree with our columnists? Have your say by writing to cjninfo@gmail.com.

A temple in technology

Evelyn Tauben

Over the course of 10 days last month, one Toronto family (my husband's cousin Nomi and her husband Adam) made the difficult decision to relocate their son Arlo's bar mitzvah from Israel to their house and then online due to the rapidly changing circumstances around the spread of COVID-19. Postponing was not an option because Arlo had been preparing a specific parashah for over a year.

This dramatic shift in plans actually enabled my family to participate in the simcha. Having a planned event (and a reason to change out of pajamas) was also a welcome respite to long, unstructured days as March Break became homebound void of play dates or museum outings.

As we logged onto Zoom for the Thursday morning service, I put out our kippah basket. We each plucked one from the colourful catalogue of simchas past, flipping them over to read the names on the inside. A teal one from a bat mitzvah dated 1990, a grey suede yarmulke from my husband's friends' 2005 wedding. My stepdaughter always selects the orange knit kippah from our wedding. Memories of those moments and people enter the room as we cover our heads.

The basket also contains kippot from simchas we never attended, salvaged from a drawer in my grandparents' house when we mournfully divided their belongings. Sandra and Gordon married in 1987, presumably in Montreal. A souvenir from their nuptials joins the crumpled and folded archive of celebrations spanning three decades – a collection of friends, family and strangers crammed together in one small space.

By the dining room table, the four of us faced a large monitor relocated from my office. Another screen displayed the booklet that Nomi and Adam created for the service, beginning with a 1935 poem by Russian-Jewish writer Osip Mandelstam (persecuted and presumed murdered by Stalin's regime) that speaks to persistence in restrictive times: "Having deprived me of seas, of running and flying away, / and allowing me only to walk upon the violent earth, / what have you achieved? A splendid result: / you could not stop my lips from moving."

Arlo Rotbard-Seelig's online bar mitzvah EVELYN TAUBEN PHOTO

> People are meant to be together. We are meant to congregate.

Arlo stood behind a makeshift *shtender* in his living room facing a computer and led a beautiful service, sharing a thoughtful devar Torah after chanting from a borrowed Torah. Huddled by the screen, we *kvelled* and watched Arlo and his family move through the service with love, grace, humour and elbow bumps – surrounded by little rectangles filled with images of relatives from over six countries and 22 cities (including St. John's, Haifa, Düsseldorf, and Oaxaca).

From the solitude of our home, we sang along and responded "Amen" at the appointed times. We stood when they announced, "Please rise" – and the little boxes on our screen became filled with midriffs replacing the up-close, eager gazes peering out.

People are meant to be together. We are meant to congregate. In fact, Arlo's parashah – Vayakhel – is about a gathering. It begins: "And Moses assembled all the congregation of the children of Israel." (Exodus 35:1)

Assembling is so central to Jewish tradition that it is mandated; certain practices are only possible with a minyan. On that Thursday, we numbered many more than the requisite quorum with over 60 devices joining the broadcast. Despite the strangeness of the setting, we entered the familiarity of the blessings and melodies. Despite the distance, we were brought closer to fellow Jews around the world – a collection of friends, family and strangers seemingly crammed together on one small screen.

Arlo's bar mitzvah was a moving and certainly memorable experience. While an online ritual was an adaptation to an unusual reality, we were still connected – not just across geographies but reaching back in time, continuing enduring traditions at times practiced in difficult conditions at different moments in Jewish history.

Nomi and Adam promised to share Arlo's custom kippot when exchanging objects returns to acceptability. It will join our kippah collection. And in the coming years, when we dig into the basket before lighting Shabbat candles, beginning a seder or making *Havdalah* we'll remember when Arlo became a bar mitzvah and, with the aid of technology, we assembled as a congregation of the children of Israel. ■

News

Businesses helping out in fight against COVID-19

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You've probably already seen the picture

Ontario Premier Doug Ford personally driving his pickup truck to, well, pick up a load of 90,000 face masks that were donated to the province by Markham, Ont.-based dental supply company Dental Brands. But what you may not have known is that Dental Brands is a Jewish-run organization.

"The CEO is Israeli. A lot of our staff is Jewish.... I like to say we're more of a United Nations here, because we have all different types of people, different types of religions working here. But I would say the strongest ethnic group is Jews. Despite our size, we try and operate like a family business," said Mike Lauterpacht, the company's vice-president of operations.

"The ethics or the morale that we grow up with in a Jewish home, that extends beyond the business we do on a day-to-day basis."

Dental Brands donated 100,000 masks in total, with 10,000 going to police, as well as 4,600 bottles of hand sanitizer. Lauterpacht and the company's CEO were discussing how they could help fight the coronavirus when a friend who knew Ford happened to reach out. Lauterpacht said to pass on the message that they wanted to donate their supplies, and after that it came together "crazy fast." Before he knew it, he was talking to Ford on the phone, and then the premier, whom Lauterpacht said came across as a "down-to-earth guy who really wanted to help," was coming to pick up the masks.

Lauterpacht said Dental Brands wanted to help give back in part because the community had been so supportive in continuing to buy their stock as dental offices started to close. Of course, they also wanted to play their part in the effort, and knew they had a unique opportunity to make a tangible difference.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford picks up a donation of 90,000 face masks from Dental Brands, one of the Jewish businesses helping in the fight against COVID-19.
MIKE LAUTERPACHT PHOTO

"I think that the more that we help each other, the more we're going to beat this virus. I think that's something we're seeing, forget about what we did here. Wherever you are, (whether) it's helping your neighbour or someone else checking on your parents, because you can't," he said. "Living in the Jewish community, that's something that I think is integral to who and what we are, community-type people... so giving back makes sense."

Other Jewish-run Canadian businesses have also been doing their part to aid in the fight against the spread of COVID-19. In Toronto, Amexon Development Corp., which is run by Joe Azouri, is offering free accommodation to doctors and nurses at its Grand Hotel & Suites property in downtown Toronto.

"Front-line doctors and nurses in nearby hospitals are working tirelessly to keep us all safe, and Amexon is pleased to offer a comfortable facility so they can get much-needed rest and avoid long commutes. We hope we can be of help since our hotel is conveniently located near the major downtown hospitals," said general manager Heidi Wengle in a press release emailed to *The CJN*. "We see this initiative as our civic duty and acknowledge the efforts of those who are continuing to work long days and nights to keep patients safe and COVID-19 at bay. We will do whatever it takes to help make the hotel stay for these heroes feel like a home away from home."

In a follow-up email, a spokesperson for Amexon confirmed that the hotel made 177 rooms on separate floors available for the health-care workers, and that, as of March 31, many had already booked rooms in the hotel.

Another business that modified its operations because of the coronavirus is Samuelsohn, a menswear company in Montreal. Stephen Granovsky, CEO and principal owner of the company, said it is in discussions with the government about producing both surgical masks and gowns in its factory in Montreal. He said senior civil servants in Quebec's Department of Health first forecasted a shortage of gowns and then masks, and so the revamped factories will be focused on those items.

So far, the biggest hurdle hasn't been preparing the factories, but actually sourcing the material for the protective equipment. It was only in the last week that Samuelsohn was able to source a sufficient supply of the specific fabric that best protects against fluid and bacteria. Granovsky estimates the factory will be able to make more than 250,000 masks a week in each factory, and while it's too early to accurately estimate the rate for gowns, he said it will certainly be more than tens of thousands a week. As high as those numbers seem, Granovsky said a typical mid-sized hospital would have used around 15,000 masks a day before the virus.

It's a big change, but Granovsky makes it seem like there was never any other choice for him to make.

"It is an incredibly rewarding experience .... It's an opportunity for our people to have work, because obviously our factories are shut down," he said. And beyond that, "It's a call to duty, and there's really nothing more important than whatever we can do to produce protective equipment.... It's far more than our duty. It's really an obvious opportunity to make a contribution that I don't know that I'll ever get to make in my lifetime again." ■

Zoom meeting hijacked by anti-Semites

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About 10 minutes into an online presentation on anti-Semitism, the anti-Semites showed up.

That wasn't part of the plan.

The March 30 "web talk" sponsored by the Canadian Antisemitism Education Foundation (CAEF) was intended for its supporters and was to focus on the topic, "The IHRA, One Antidote Against Anti-Semitism," said Andria Spindel, the organization's executive director.

Employing the Zoom platform, which enables online video meetings for multiple participants, the talk featured speaker Yifa Segal, executive director of the International Legal Forum in Tel Aviv.

About 45 people had signed on when, early into Segal's presentation, participants noticed very odd behaviour from a couple of the others taking part.

Participants – the legitimate ones – heard someone say "*sieg heil*." That was followed by rude and personal comments aimed at Segal. The 'N-word' was painted on the screen in orange, followed by "I hate blacks." Obscene and pornographic images were also posted.

Then it appeared that the intruders were taking over the entire meeting.

Segal, who was giving the briefing, was unaware of the interruptions, but not long after they began, the web talk was cancelled, Spindel said.

"I knew we'd been invaded. I knew we lost control," she said.

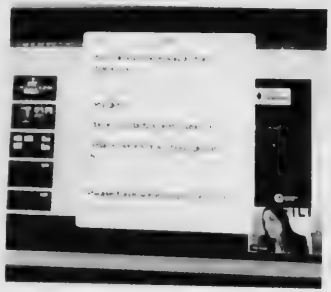
It turned out one of the intruders has appeared in other Zoom attacks, Spindel said.

Spindel said it is likely the meeting was hacked by white supremacists. The event was open to anyone who clicked a link that had been sent to members of CAEF's mailing list or by linking in while the event was in progress. There was no advanced registration, she said.

The incident was brought to the attention of B'nai Brith Canada, which contacted Toronto Police Services. B'nai Brith also notified Zoom, in order "to raise concerns about the security of users who could be similarly targeted by hackers."

"This incident comes a day after the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) published an article exposing a trend of 'Zoom-bombing,' in which events happening on the app have been hacked and disrupted in similar ways," B'nai Brith stated in a news release.

World Israel News, meanwhile, reported



A screenshot from the hijacked meeting.

that "online trolls have taken to disrupting Zoom meetings of Jewish groups with offensive imagery and text."

One Zoom-bombing included a Torah lesson in which "a participant unmuted himself and yelled, 'Hitler did nothing wrong!' Another participant changed his Zoom background to a picture of a child holding Hitler's manifesto, *Mein Kampf*, and others began shouting 'Heil Hitler.' "

Spindel said she doesn't know how the hackers learned about the Segal webinar, but speculated a posting on CAEF's Facebook site may have alerted the hackers to the webinar.

Michael Mostyn, CEO of B'nai Brith Canada, noted that "there are always security risks associated with using online forms of communication. Hatred is not taking any time off, and racists are as eager as ever to target the Jewish community and other minorities. Please take proper precautions when using the Zoom app."

Referring to the upcoming Passover holiday, Mostyn said, "B'nai Brith is encouraging any individuals planning on using Zoom technology for their seders to take security precautions that are within their own controls. This includes creating and using passwords in Zoom meeting rooms and never publicly posting the Zoom link you will be using online. There are also many alternative video-conferencing platforms that can be explored."

As for Segal's presentation on anti-Semitism, Spindel said they're hoping to re-do the webinar "with all the security precautions in place." These might include ensuring webinars are registration-based and the Internet address is not publicized; employing a host to manage comments and eject users, if necessary; turning off the chat function; or disabling screen sharing. ■

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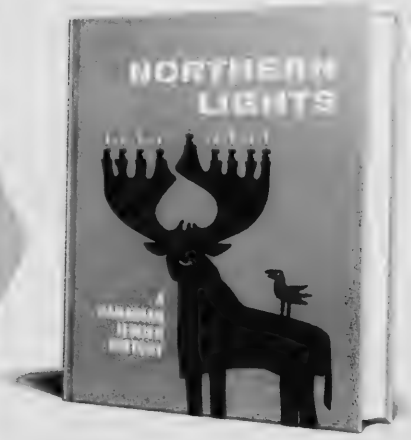
Senator Linda Frum



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ASI-Canada and CZCA support Israel's soldiers and their families

The Association for the Soldiers of Israel – Canada (ASI-Canada) has been fundraising for projects for the well-being of IDF soldiers on active duty for more than 40 years. ASI-Canada is the only non-profit organization in Canada authorized by the IDF to raise funds for Israel's soldiers. The organization is in direct contact with the IDF on a daily basis to ensure that the soldiers' needs are met. Throughout the years, ASI-Canada has built and renovated facilities on army bases, provided flights home for lone soldiers, vacation weeks for combat soldiers and met the emergency needs of soldiers during times of conflict.

However, even veterans of this organization could not foresee the new and massive challenge that the IDF is facing today.

The COVID-19 global pandemic has struck on a level not seen since the Spanish flu in 1918. Every country in the world has been affected and has had to implement extreme measures to prevent the spread of this virus.

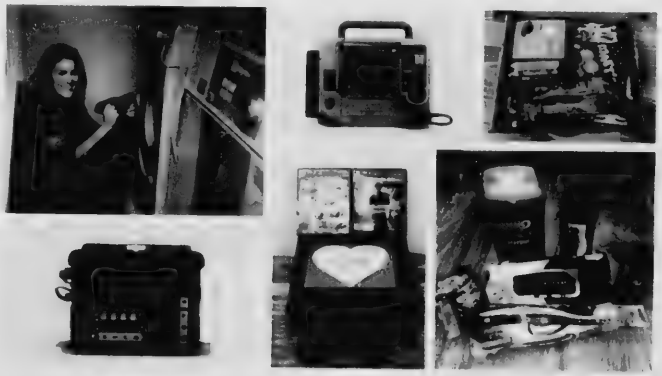
The IDF has been forced to face a new deadly challenge: fighting an invisible enemy known as the coronavirus. Israel's army has moved to a higher state of readiness – usually reserved for preparation against an enemy attack – in an operation named Ray of Light. Thousands of reservists have been called up and the IDF Home Front Command has assumed responsibility for managing the situation alongside civilian authorities. The command has helped establish quarantine facilities in hotels across the country and provided essential services such as food and medicines to Israel's elderly population. Thousands of soldiers were called in to assist with this operation.

In order to deal with the new and unknown threat, the IDF enforced immediate lockdown of all bases and implemented quarantine measures involving IDF soldiers in order to prevent the spread of the virus throughout the bases and ranks. Tens of thousands of combat soldiers were ordered to remain on base until the crisis is over. All lone soldiers returning from other countries were immediately sent into a two-week quarantine period at the Givat Olga Recreation Village. Soldiers who were infected with the virus were immediately evacuated to the Ashkelon Recreation Village, which had been converted into a military hospital.

These extensive restrictions created completely different needs in a larger order of magnitude, which the army and ASI-Canada had never dealt with in the past.

Following an urgent decision mandated by the ASI-Canada board in mid-March, hundreds of thousands of dollars were transferred to Israel in one day to help tens of thousands of soldiers.

Translation of signs held from right to left: "I was also called up by the corona draft notice. The IDF coronavirus test lab. We are staying in the lab for you. Stay home for us."



ASI-Canada is supporting Israel's soldiers during the COVID-19 pandemic with donations of, clockwise from top left, commercial washer and dryer sets, defibrillator monitors, snack packages, hygiene kits, Sony PlayStation consoles and games, and respirators.

With these funds, ASI-Canada is providing lone soldiers in quarantine with hygiene kits and Sony PlayStation game consoles to help them cope with their isolation. These provisions, as well as board games and snack packages, were also sent to the tens of thousands of combat soldiers who cannot leave their bases and outposts until the coronavirus crisis is over. These items boost the morale of the soldiers and help them deal with their lengthy confinement.

The military hospital established at Ashkelon and the medical corps are in urgent need of essential medical equipment, such as respirators, tactical breathing devices, defibrillator monitors and ambulances, in order to deal with the rising number of soldiers who have contracted the virus. ASI-Canada transferred funds to purchase numerous devices, but the need for this life-saving equipment is greater than what has been provided.

As army bases are ill-equipped to deal with tens of thousands of soldiers needing to wash their clothes, ASI-Canada is also providing commercial washer and dryer sets to the bases.

The crisis has also affected tens of thousands of family members of the IDF soldiers who have lost their jobs and income due to the current COVID-19 pandemic. Combat soldiers who had been helping their families make ends meet have been confined to their bases and cannot help ease the financial burden of their families.

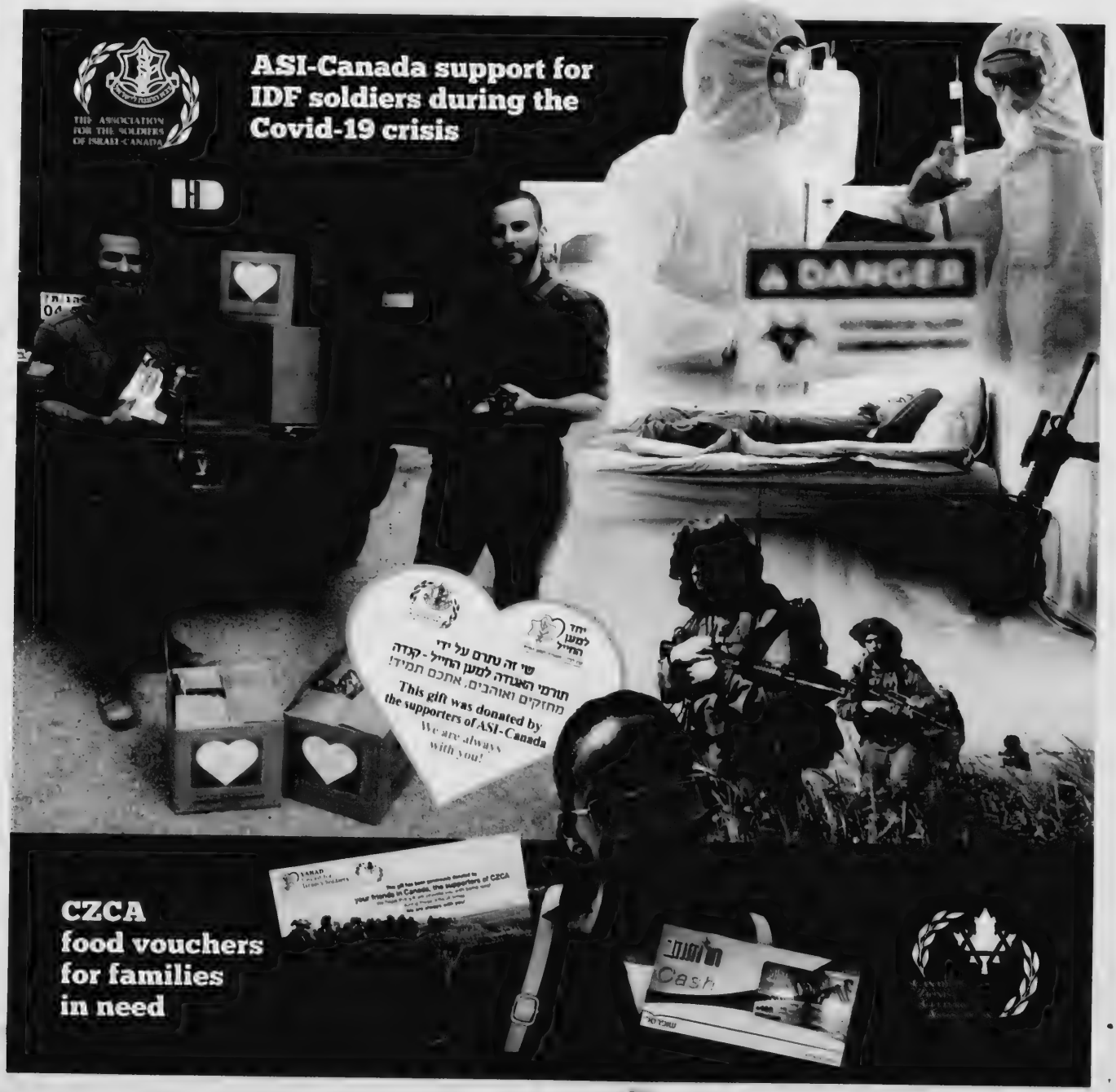
The Canadian Zionist Cultural Association (CZCA), which supports the families of fallen soldiers, provides scholarships for former IDF soldiers and food vouchers for families in need during the Passover and Rosh Hashanah holidays, has received an urgent request to provide additional food vouchers amounting to hundreds of thousands of shekels to ease the burden on families in need. Thanks to incredible donors who provided these food vouchers, these soldiers' families know that they are not alone during this frightening time.

In a phone call to CZCA executive director Liora Katz, Brig.-Gen. Michel Yanko, deputy head of the IDF Personnel Directorate, expressed his deepest gratitude and appreciation on behalf of Israel and the IDF for the contribution of ASI-Canada and CZCA to the well-being of the soldiers and their families at this critical time. ASI-Canada and CZCA "are the wind beneath our wings," he said. "You provided soldiers and their families with a feeling of security. It is really heartwarming and we feel an enormous bond."

A lone soldier from South Africa, who is one of the quarantined soldiers at the Givat Olga Recreation Village, said in a video recording she sent to ASI-Canada: "We just wanted to say a huge thank you, from all the lone soldiers especially and from soldiers in general. All the *chayalim* just really appreciate what you guys are doing, our families say thank you. Whether it is for the entertainment you have provided, the love, the smiling faces, the concept of someone thinking of us always, we just really appreciate it. So, thank you, thank you, thank you. We can't tell you how much, how grateful we are and how much appreciation we really have."■

All this is made possible by the dedicated donors, board members, volunteers and staff of ASI-Canada and CZCA. So much has been done, but there is so much more to do, as no one knows how long this crisis will continue. As each day passes, more is needed. All funds raised will go toward the urgent needs of IDF soldiers and their families in Israel. To donate, please call 416-783-3053 or 1-800-433-6226, or email info@asicanada.org or info@czca.org.

THEIR JOB IS TO LOOK AFTER ISRAEL. OUR JOB IS TO LOOK AFTER THEM AND THEIR FAMILIES.



IN MEMORY OF

ROMAN ZIEGLER Z"L

The Sarah and Chaim Neuberger Holocaust Education Centre, UJA Federation of Greater Toronto offers our heartfelt condolences to the extended Ziegler family on the passing of Roman Ziegler, a Holocaust survivor and speaker at the Neuberger Centre.

May his memory be a blessing.

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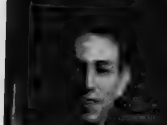

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'The stock market cannot be a bank account'

PAUL LUNGEN
plungen@thecjn.ca

Paul Harris

If riding a roller-coaster makes you feel a little queasy, then watching your stock market investments take the roller-coaster ride of the century must be making you feel sick to your stomach.

Financial advisers have long told their clients that the stock market will provide the best returns over time, but also that the market can be quite volatile – and that was before fears over the coronavirus whipsawed the market into a cycle of tailspin and recovery.

On March 25 alone, the Dow Jones Industrial Average, which tracks 30 U.S. blue-chip companies, rose 5.2 per cent at midday before giving back some gains and ending the day 2.4 per cent to close at 21,200.

On the same day, the S&P/TSX index of about 250 Canadian stocks, jumped 4.5 per cent to close at 13,139. The very next day, with the U.S. Congress set to adopt a $2-trillion relief bill, the Dow climbed another 825 points at midday to 22,025, a gain of 3.9 per cent. In Toronto, the TSX index climbed nearly 233 points to 13,371, a gain of 1.8 per cent.

And then, on March 27, it all went south again, with the Dow, S&P 500 and TSX falling from three to 4.8 per cent by 11 a.m., bringing the Dow back down to 21,652, the S&P 500 to 2,536 and the TSX to 12,720.

It's all a far cry from the dizzying highs the markets were testing just a few weeks before. In mid-February, the Dow was trading over 29,000.

At its high on the close of trading on Feb. 20, the TSX was at 17,944. In 22 days, the market dropped around 32 per cent.

So, what to do in these trying times?

Like a lot of people, Paul Harris checks his temperature every morning to make sure he doesn't have the coronavirus, and then he checks the temperature of the markets. As portfolio manager and partner with Harris Douglas Asset Management, that's pretty much his job.

Surprisingly, very few of his clients have been calling him in a panic, asking what to do about their investments. As a firm for medium- to high-net-worth investors, Harris tailors its portfolios to meet the needs and risk profiles of its clients.

"The stock market cannot be a bank account," he said, pointing out that those investors with a longer time horizon can weather the storm. Those who need to draw cash from their investments should already be invested in fixed income assets.

If you allocate assets properly, you shouldn't be as worried about the volatility of the market. Over time, it's a good bet. Harris pointed to the market's growth since its low in March 2009. For instance, the S&P 500 has gone up more than 300 per cent.

"So, you have done well over a period of time." However, "you've given back all the gains since 2016, when Donald Trump became president."

And as for clients who are nervous, Harris asks them, what do you need the money for? If you're worried about your RRSP and you're 50, you still have 22 years before you have to begin to withdraw the money and spend it.

Don't make a short-term decision when your needs are long term, he advises.

Shawn Blainey, a senior financial planning adviser at Assante Capital Management, said he's taken a fair number of calls from clients recently, but only one wanted to get out of the market.

"Definitely more are concerned. They're not asking to get out, but to find out how bad it is," he said.

Some want to add to their positions, seeing a depressed market as a buying opportunity, he said.

Blainey, who said he creates balanced portfolios for clients based on their needs, time horizon and risk profile, said those with actively managed portfolios with a mix of cash, bonds and equities have fared better than those exposed 100 per cent to the market, like those who own exchange-traded funds (ETFs), many of which closely track the ups and downs of the market.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Shawn Blainey

One investor he pointed to is down 10 per cent year to date, compared to the drop of 25 per cent for the Dow and Toronto indexes.

As for selling with the idea of getting back in when the market improves, Blainey said in his 27 years as a financial adviser, he's never seen anyone time it right.

You might be able to exit before the absolute bottom of the market, but you rarely get back in on time.

"You need a lot of good news in the media, and when you get that, the market has moved past the point where they sold," he said.

That's what happened after the March 2009 market bottom. For most of March and up until October, the market made large gains. Media coverage of the economy and the market didn't get positive until October that year, he said.

As to what the future holds, no one knows for sure.

Central banks have done what they can by pumping liquidity into the economy, but this downturn is driven by fear, "things that central banks can't do anything about," Harris said.

Fiscal (government) stimulus is needed to help the restaurant owner who is terrified of losing his business, he said.

What the market will look like in the future is still anyone's guess. Blainey said some analysts are predicting a V-shaped recovery (as plotted on a graph), with a sharp and fast move up. Others foresee a W-shaped recovery.

Either way, Blainey is confident the market will recover.

"Trying to time it is impossible," he said.

Harris is also optimistic about the future. "The market will come back. It could take some time."

"It will be harder for certain parts of the economy to bounce back quickly, but as a general rule, the stock market will do better over a long period of time."

"This fall in 10 years from now will show up as a little blip in the chart.... In 10 years from now, you may look back and say, 'I should have bought, it was a great opportunity.' " ■

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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
APRIL 9, 2020

Atlantic community reaches out to those in need

JOEL JACOBSON
ATLANTIC CORRESPONDENT

The Atlantic Canadian Jewish community might be small, but during the COVID-19 isolations and quarantines, it has drawn close to ensure the comfort of its people.

"We started a phone support program in Halifax (and followed up in the rest of the region) after calls were received from ex-pat Nova Scotians whose senior parents, relatives and friends live here," said Naomi Rosenfeld, executive director of the Atlantic Jewish Council (AJC). "They were concerned of isolation because of the need to stay home because of their age and/or health vulnerability.

"They asked 'can anyone do errands for my folks, even check on them, visit them, to be sure they're OK, while they're isolated,'" she said.

AJC leaders in New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland-Labrador made similar initiatives.

"We set up a volunteer telephone committee, eventually about 85 wonderful people, and started contacting almost everyone in the community, not just seniors, but everyone," Rosenfeld said.

Naomi Rosenfeld

Lea Wagner had a very astute 94-year old man on her list who still lives alone, in his own home.

He told her he is fine for now, walks to do his own grocery shopping at a nearby supermarket, but would welcome another call which Wagner has provided.

"I'm only living in Halifax six months a year now," said Wagner, who made her volunteer calls from New York. "This keeps me in touch. And it makes me feel good keeping someone company for a bit. My recipients were happy someone was reaching out to them."

Volunteers were on call to arrange grocery shopping or other errands. As the threat of the virus intensified, and Nova Scotia health officials urged isolation and even quarantine, the need for the calling program became more important.

While most people reported no immediate needs, the appreciation was evident.

Devorah Gillard was excited to make calls. "I talked to five families and I have to say this has been one of the most rewarding and uplifting things I have ever done. I get off the phone feeling energized and so encouraged. People's responses have been just joyous and so appreciative. I feel like I am building new relationships. It took so little time to have gained so much joy."

The AJC's Rosenfeld added, "I've made some calls and feel so wonderful talking with these people. I wish I had more time to make more calls. I'm learning a lot more about the community by connecting one-on-one."

In the smaller communities throughout the region, callers contacted people they've known their entire lives.

"It's easier for them to make the support calls than it might be in Halifax where many volunteers are making cold calls," Rosenfeld said.

One 85-year-old woman in Halifax had a call from a woman in her 20s. They hit it off so well that the younger woman has called almost every day since. The older lady refers to her as a "second daughter."

One Halifax man said he had no concerns other than, "there's no hockey for me to watch."

As Pesach nears, and only two major grocery stores in Halifax carry Passover products, some of those isolated are asking for help shopping. Volunteers rush to their aid, knowing stores might run short, but, in this last week, the supply seems ample.

Events honoring Yom ha-Shoah and celebrating Yom ha-Atzmaut have been scrubbed, although the latter will become a virtual program. Other virtual programs were planned to keep the community engaged and connected during the time of isolation.

Rosenfeld was proud that AJC transitioned certain planned programs to an at-home model, such as creation of seder plates by children. Emergency grocery funds were dispersed to support Atlantic Canadians who regularly received the service from AJC. ■

Online classes up and running in Vancouver

LAUREN KRAMER
PACIFIC CORRESPONDENT

As public and independent schools in British Columbia scramble to find a way to continue teaching in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Greater Vancouver's five Jewish day schools are priding themselves on online classes that are all ready up, running and working out the kinks they experience along the way.

Timing is everything and in this case the timing for Passover break was clearly in the favour of the Jewish schools. "In early March, when the B.C. Ministry of Education told us to start preparing for isolation, we were in the rare position of being open while the public and independent schools were closed for their two-week spring break," said Emily Greenberg, head of school at Vancouver Talmud Torah (VTT). "In a twist of fate it ended up putting the Jewish day schools as the front-runners in education."

VTT took a week to train staff how to teach on the new platforms, and as of March 23 the elementary school with 474 students was back up and running, using Google classroom and live chats as community hours.

A week into the online sessions, Greenberg said feedback has been incredibly positive. "For the most part our families are very happy with the product. We'll use the Passover break to do some final tweaks that ensure our kids are on track to meet the curricular requirements for the year, so we don't lose time.

"I feel certain we'll meet the vast majority of the curriculum requirements for the year," she continued. "A huge piece of our core competencies is social-emotional learning, and I think the perspectives kids are gaining from this experience will contribute to that learning. For children who are not engaging in the process it will be more complicated, but we're working on providing individual support to families that need it."

The heads of school at the five Jewish day schools are working together on an unprecedented level, sharing communications and counselling each other on what works and what doesn't. "We've started conversations with King David High School about having their students tutor our students, and we're always looking for additional ways to find meaningful connections for the schools," Greenberg said.

Russ Klein, head of school at KDHS, said he was astonished at the extent to which his staff has risen to the challenge of continuing classes online in a matter of three days.

"This is outside everyone's comfort zone.

> *I feel certain we'll meet the vast majority of the curriculum requirements for the year.*
>
> **Emily Greenberg, Vancouver Talmud Torah**

Not only did staff have to learn Zoom, a new online platform, they also had to learn how to teach on it – manage the students, learn the features of the program, and adapt their teaching while considering the emotional well-being of the students, who are probably anxious and stressed, without overwhelming them," he said.

The pandemic has caused pandemonium, he conceded, and educational content delivery will be slightly reduced. "But in terms of the skills and competencies that the B.C. Ministry wants our teachers to teach, that will be done."

Six days into its online instruction, Klein said the challenge will be extending the momentum after the Passover break. "As we get deeper into this our students' energy might wane, and we need to think about how we can keep everyone's energy and positivity up, and how to continue to involve students in school life," he said.

"We're also considering how we'll incorporate Yom ha-Shoah, Yom ha-Zikaron and Yom ha-Atzmaut meaningfully into our curriculum, because we don't want to lose the ingredients and relationships that are critical to our school."

But the prime responsibility for educators at KDHS, as with all the Jewish schools in Vancouver, is the emotional well-being of the kids, he emphasized. "This is an incredibly scary time for them, and we want them to stay positive, engaged, and to feel supported."

Public and independent schools in British Columbia would have returned to classes on March 30 and superintendent Scott Robinson said that by the week of April 7 teachers would begin to offer most students "learning opportunities," and that by mid-April such opportunities would be in place for all students.

He asked for patience while educators "figure out the details," and promised childcare for children of essential services workers. ■

Quebec Hasidim placed under quarantine

JANICE ARNOLD
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The Kiryas Tash Hasidic community, an enclave within the town of Boisbriand north of Montreal, was placed under quarantine on March 29 after a spike in confirmed cases of COVID-19 among its approximately 4,000 members.

The measure was taken in co-operation with the community's leaders, who were worried by the growing number of cases. At that point, 19 community members had tested positive for the coronavirus, said Tash spokesperson Isaac Weiss.

It is believed they contracted the virus after travelling to New York to celebrate Purim earlier in the month before non-essential travel across the border was halted.

"We are taking extraordinary measures to prevent an outbreak in the community," said Eric Goyer, director of public health for the Laurentians region.

The day before, community leaders had requested help from the authorities to contain the outbreak. A checkpoint was erected to ensure only essential services enter the part of Boisbriand were Kiryas Tash is located.

A poster from the Quebec government giving instructions in Hebrew.

Goyer said the community has been co-operating with all other measures to avoid spreading the virus and widespread testing continues there.

Weiss said initially some community members were resisting the ban on any gatherings outside of immediate family members, despite their rabbis' instructions.

Complying with the self-isolation and social distancing directives are not easy for the Tash Hasidim or the other Hasidic communities in Montreal due to how close-knit they are, their large families, and their absolute devotion to prayer and other religious practice.

On March 13, Quebec Premier François Legault asked that houses of worship close, which he reiterated more strongly a few days later. On March 18, the Jewish Community Council of Montreal, which comprises the beit din, ordered all shuls, community centres and schools to shut down.

The synagogues in Kiryas Tash have been closed since then, Weiss said.

The health authorities and local police say they are there to help the community during the quarantine, such as by ensuring it has sufficient food and medications.

Goyer warned against any stigmatization of the Hasidim.

On March 25, a 67-year-old Hasidic man who lived in the borough of Outremont was the first person in Montreal to die from the virus. Max Lieberman, a spokesperson for the Council of Hasidic Jews of Quebec, said the father of 10 children had been healthy prior to that.

TheYeshivaWorld.com identified him as Rabbi Avraham Yechiel Kraus.

In keeping with Quebec government directives, his funeral was held privately graveside and attended by about a dozen immediate relatives, said Lieberman. Hasidic leaders are strictly enforcing compliance through a committee set up specifically for that purpose.

Men can be seen praying from their balconies in groupings of 10, allowing them to form minyanim at a safe remove from each other.

Elsewhere in the Montreal Jewish community, Côte St-Luc and Hampstead, among other West End districts, have been identified by health officials as "hot spots" for confirmed cases on the Island of Montreal.

Côte St-Luc Mayor Mitchell Brownstein called his municipality with its high proportion of seniors, including hundreds of returning snowbirds, and seven synagogues plus several small Jewish congregations, where large events had been held in recent weeks, "a bad cocktail that is going to explode."

On March 29, a drive-through testing clinic that can screen 400 people a day opened in the parking lot of Côte St-Luc's Cavendish Mall. At that time, health authorities said at least 50 cases of the disease had been confirmed in Côte St-Luc.

By contrast, Mayor Bill Steinberg of neighbouring Hampstead (pop. 7,100) was downplaying things, claiming in a post on the town's website that the severity of the situation in Montreal was being blown out of proportion by the media. "They always assume the worst in order to have the most dramatic story." ■

JF&CS keeps running while 'desperate' calls spike

RON CSILLAG
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Brian Prousky, executive director of Jewish Family and Child Service of Greater Toronto (JF&CS), is blunt in assessing what his agency is facing these days: "In my more than 30 years in social services, I've never seen anything quite like what we're going through now."

Like other social service agencies in Canada and around the world, JF&CS is seeing a "steady escalation of increasingly desperate calls" from people who have lost their jobs or have relied on others who have lost their jobs in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Prousky told *The CJN* in a recent interview.

"These people are frightened, struggling to feed themselves and their children, buy over-the-counter medication, pay the rent," he said. "We're seeing a steady increase in calls over the last few weeks, and a steady increase in the level of desperation people are feeling."

Despite the virus-related spike, JF&CS's goal is "to keep our programs up and running. We recognize that for many vulnerable people in the community, we are their only safety net during this time. We recognize that abandoning them now when they need us more than ever would be unthinkable."

Among the agency's top priorities, Prousky said, is to ensure delivery of services to the one in four Holocaust survivors who live below the poverty threshold in the Toronto area. He credits different streams of funding created by the provincial government and UJA Federation of Greater Toronto, one of JF&CS's major funders, for launching seven key initiatives to address the needs of the most vulnerable.

These include providing groceries to those with immediate needs, expanding Kosher Meals on Wheels, bolstering rent subsidies and allotting an extra $100,000 to help Holocaust survivors living in poverty.

"We had some real generous people in our community step up and help," he said. "Their acts of generosity and kindness have really allowed us to extend our reach to a growing number of people impacted by the crisis."

Calls to JF&CS regarding child welfare and protection are not necessarily higher now, because many referrals in that area come from schools, which are closed, explained Talyah Breslin, director of the agency's child and welfare services.

However, JF&CS is seeing a lot of outreach involving those aged 18 to 21. It has boosted funding to those young people who are no longer in the agency's "in-care" system and have lost their jobs, Breslin said.

She said JF&CS is trying to balance the potential threat of the virus with keeping children safe. Many meetings with families are being conducted virtually.

In fact, of the agency's 33 programs, the vast majority are operating remotely.

And though JF&CS has a shortage of personal protective equipment, "a lot of work is going into talking with kids about what to expect if they see someone dressed as a spaceman."

The bigger concern is time, and children who are out of view.

"We worry that the longer this goes on, the more kids and families will be hidden and in isolation," Breslin said. "We hope that people in the community are keeping their eyes out, looking out for those individuals, and to call us.

"Our main worry is the kids we're not hearing about. They don't have their teachers to go talk to."

There's also increased support for foster parents to help pay for indoor activities and groceries, she said.

Monica Auerbach, director of family services at JF&CS, said the agency is noticing a rise in domestic violence, reflecting trends in other parts of the world where large segments of the population are in isolation or quarantine.

She said police in York Region, north of Toronto, recently reported that over a seven-day period, incidents of domestic violence jumped by 25 per cent over the previous week.

"We're seeing those calls reflected in our intake and in our referrals," Auerbach said.

Prior to the pandemic, JF&CS was able to work with victims of abuse to help them flee their abusers. Now, "a number of women and children still live with their abusers, and our staff is working hard, keeping in touch with those people and developing safety plans to ensure that women and children stay safe."

She said JF&CS's poverty reduction program also serves "extremely socially isolated" individuals who "are terrified they cannot get the groceries and basics they need. It's the anxiety from children and families that we're dealing with every day. It's everywhere."

Prousky lauds the community at large for stepping up to the plate. At last count, UJA Federation's COVID-19 relief campaign had raised $500,000. ■

Trivial pursuits

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

41. Musician, long associated with Bob Dylan, who formed his own band.

42. Son of Polish concentration-camp survivors who played bass and keyboards and sang for a band that has sold close to 50 million records. First name: Gary.

43. His biggest hit was "Theme from A Summer Place."

44. Played the role of the father in the movie *The Diary of Anne Frank*.

45. Fast-talking comedian who rivaled Lenny Bruce for his pungent political satire.

46. He helped found the Famous Players movie chain.

47. Canadian movie mogul had a spectacular rise and fall, and likened himself to Icarus.

48. First manager of Toronto's Royal Alexandra Theatre, as well as Hanlan's Hotel, Hanlan's Point Amusement Park, and Toronto Maple Leafs baseball club.

49. Toronto mayor born as Hyman Gewirtz.

50. Once boasted he could "sell refrigerators to Eskimos," later became mayor.

51. Second City actor who starred in more than 60 movies and currently appears in a hit CBC satirical comedy.

52. Major art collector and theatre impresario.

53. In 1807 he was refused entry into the Legislature of Lower Canada because he was Jewish and refused to be sworn into office "on the faith of a Christian."

54. Canada's first Jewish cabinet minister, he served in the government of Pierre Trudeau.

55. He was elected to the Ontario Legislature despite the fact that he was an avowed communist.

56. Bohemian-born, German-speaking marble cutter and monument maker who became Toronto's first Jewish councillor in the 1880s.

57. Toronto's second Jewish alderman was known for his powerful skills as an orator, especially impromptu as the situation demanded.

58. Born into a working-class family in Toronto in 1929, he became a renowned sculptor who created the Three Graces fountain at Bay and Wellesley, and several major pieces for Expo '67.

59. Canadian-born Israeli author whose popular works include *The Aleppo Codex*, *Pumpkinflowers* and *Spies of No Country*.

60. This pioneering film family built a movie chain across Canada when cinema was still in its infancy.

61. Architectural firm that built many early theatres in Toronto.

62. Notable short-story writer who lived in Ottawa.

63. This nurse worked for years to establish Mount Sinai, a Jewish hospital in Toronto.

64. Immunologist who co-discovered an antigen used as the basis of a blood test for colorectal cancer.

65. First Jewish woman on Supreme Court of Canada.

66. Historian of the Jewish community and the labour movement, was also president of the Canadian Jewish Congress.

67. War historian who served as head of Canada's War Museum in Ottawa.

68. This literary historian became the foremost modern authority on the life and works of the American novelist Henry James.

69. Scholar and museum specialist who helped develop (and remains involved in) Polin, Warsaw's world-class Museum of the History of Polish Jews.

70. Opatow, Poland-born Torontonian who ran a paint store and in his later years took up painting scenes from his childhood in the shtetl.

71. Prominent 19th-century Montreal rabbi, author, Orientalist and scientist, originally from London , England.

72. A pioneering American author and scholar of Jewish literature, she grew up in Montreal and earned a PhD from McGill University.

73. World-renowned philosopher who asserted that living Jewishly was the best way "to deny Hitler a posthumous victory," a tenet he called the 614th law.

74. Hungarian-born chemist who won the Nobel Prize in chemistry in 1986.

75. Winnipeg-born Los Alamos scientist who died of acute radiation syndrome.

76. She is credited with negotiating ransoms for the release of thousands of Syrian Jews.

77. This Bronfman descendant became a prominent architect and established an architectural museum in Montreal.

78. Israeli-born architect who designed such outstanding buildings as the Mamilla Mall in Jerusalem, the National Gallery in Ottawa, and Habitat 67 in Montreal.

79. This Montreal-born cartoonist has drawn comic illustrations for the *New York Times*, *Vanity Fair*, *Rolling Stone* and other magazines.

80. A Holocaust survivor-turned-painter whose abstract expressionist canvases and other various works may be seen in public galleries in Canada and internationally.

81. Born in Montreal, chairman and co-investor in Cirque du Soleil.

82. His signature once adorned Canadian banknotes.

83. Winnipeg-born co-founder, with Izzy Asper, of CanWest Global Communications.

84. Came to Toronto from Russia by way of Israel when he was four, and parlayed a degree in economics into a vast corporate empire based on profits from steel factories in Ukraine.

85. Esteemed publisher long associated with the iconic publishing house McClelland & Stewart.

86. His brilliant career in comedy clubs is nothing to laugh at.

87. Halifax museum founder and philanthropist.

88. Legendary real-estate family achieved enormous wealth, but lost much of it on the Canary Wharf development project in London.

89. Massively wealthy pharmaceutical entrepreneur who, with his wife, came to a tragic end.

90. Dancer and co-founder of National Ballet of Canada.

91. She made her film debut at age 18 in a film by Denys Arcand, followed by another by Atom Egoyan.

92. As an actor, her most famous line was "I told him, 'Julie, don't go!'"

93. Vancouver-born actor-producer-director who moved to Los Angeles after landing a role on Judd Apatow's cult hit TV show *Freaks & Geeks*.

94. *King of Kensington* actor memorialized with a statue in Toronto's Kensington neighbourhood.

95. Author of the acclaimed novel, *Basic Black with Pearls*.

96. Dazzled the world as a juvenile jazz singer and, at age 26, continues to dazzle.

97. World-famous rapper and Raptors superfan.

98. Her book, *How Should A Person Be?*, was dubbed one of best of 2012 by the *New York Times*.

99. Although a poet, her 1996 novel *Fugitive Pieces* brought her international attention and many prestigious awards.

100. A pillar of the Yiddish writing community in Montreal, she wrote a three-volume novel chronicling life in the Lodz Ghetto.

ANSWERS ARE ON NEXT PAGE

ANSWERS

1. *Earth and High Heaven* (1944) by Gwethalyn Graham

2. *The Five Books of Moses Lapinsky*, by Karen X. Tulchinsky

3. Esther Brandeau, arrived to New France disguised as a Catholic young man in 1738

4. Suzanne, in the song of the same name by Montreal poet-troubador Leonard Cohen

5. Israel "Izzy" Asper (1932-2003)

6. Aba Bayefsky (1923-2001) who sketched Toronto synagogues and scenes from Kensington Market later in life

7. Barbara Frum (1937-1992) was host of CBC's *As It Happens* and *The Journal*.

8. Toronto bargain-basement and theatre entrepreneur "Honest" Ed Mirvish (1914-1921), whose earliest brush with show business occurred when he was circumcised by Al Jolson's father.

9. Duddy Kravitz's grandfather in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, the famous novel by Mordecai Richler.

10. Famed comedy duo Johnny Wayne and Frank Shuster, who performed the skit on *The Ed Sullivan Show* during one of their record 67 appearances.

11. Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut who served at Toronto's Holy Blossom Temple from 1961 until his death in 2012.

12. Toronto architect Benjamin Brown (1890-1974), one of the first Jewish architects in the city, several of whose works have been designated as heritage properties.

13. Minne Cohen, daughter of Cantor Bernard Wladowsky, worked at Women's College Hospital and specialized in pediatrics as well as music.

14. Sam Shopsowitz (circa. 1921-1984) and brother Izzy developed and sold a vast line of delicatessen products under the corporate name Shopsy's.

15. Ayelet Tsabari, born 1973.

16. Mayor Nathan Phillips (1892-1976) whose name lives on in Nathan Phillips Square, the iconic public square outside City Hall.

17. David Bezmozgis, who made his literary debut with a celebrated story collection, *Natasha*, published 2004.

18. Writer Howard Engel (1931-2019), who situated Cooperman in the fictional town of Grantham, modelled on the St. Catharines where the author grew up.

19. A.M. Klein (1919-1972), whose novel *The Second Scroll* has generated dozens of scholarly books and articles.

20. Emma Goldman, once described as "the world's most dangerous woman," was born in Kovno in 1869, and died in 1940 in a house on Vaughan Road, Toronto.

21. Adele Wiseman's first novel, *The Sacrifice*, appeared in 1956, her second, *Crackpot*, in 1974.

22. Morris Abraham Cohen (1887-1970), better known by the nickname Two-Gun Cohen, became aide-de-camp to Sun Yat sen in the Chinese National Revolutionary Army

23. After Yehuda Elberg's two novels, *Ship of the Hunted* and *The Empire of Kalman the Cripple*, were published by Syracuse University Press, the *Globe and Mail* hailed them as "unequivocal masterpieces."

24. With Sinatra's singing, Ruth Lowe's 1940 song, "I'll Never Smile Again", became a popular hit that seemed to capture the mood of an era – and might again today. She also wrote various other popular favourites

25. Rhea Clyman (1904-1981) wrote chilling eyewitness accounts of the Holodomor, the Soviet Union's government-induced famine in the 1930s, and travelled over 8,000 kilometres across Russia to report on the gulags.

26. Saul Bellow's much-acclaimed novels include *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953), *Henderson the Rain King* (1959) and *Herzog* (1964).

27. Bret Harte (1836-1902) was descended from the famous Hart family of Three Rivers, Que.

28. When he was 10, Joe Shuster (1914-1992) moved to Cleveland where he met Jerry Siegel, his collaborator on the *Superman* comic that debuted in DC Action Comics in 1938.

29. Frank Gehry, born Frank Owen Goldberg in 1929, moved with his family to California in 1947.

30. Louis B. Mayer, fabled head of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer motion picture studio, grew up in Saint John, N.B., where his father sold junk metal and his mother sold chickens.

31. Jack Warner and his U.S.-born brothers eventually established the Warner Bros. studio which launched the sound era with *The Jazz Singer* of 1927.

32. Arthur Hiller, who was born in Edmonton in 1932 and cut his teeth working for the CBC.

33. David Cronenberg (born Toronto 1943), director of *The Dead Zone*, *The Fly*, *Naked Lunch*, *Dead Ringers*, and *Crash*, among others (some best forgotten

34. Born in Hamilton in 1946, Ivan Reitman's most commercially successful movies include *Animal House*, *Stripes*, *Meatballs*, *Beethoven* and *Ghostbusters*.

35. Former Torontonian Lorne Michaels attended the U of T and worked at CBC before moving to L.A. in 1968

36. Ottawa-born Lorne Greene (1915-1987) once said that he based his portrayal of the noble patriarch Ben Cartwright on his father, a shoemaker who died before the first episode of *Bonanza* aired in 1959.

37. Montreal actor William Shatner played James T. Kirk, heroic captain of the Starship Enterprise, in the hit TV series *Star Trek*.

38. Monty Hall, born Winnipeg 1921, was the suave host of this famous American talk show.

39. Howie Mandel, born in Toronto, 1955.

40. Paul Shaffer, born in Thunder Bay in 1949.

41. Robbie Robertson, born to a Jewish father and Mohawk mother in 1932, formed the famous band called The Band. He grew up in Toronto and spent summers on the Six Nations Reservation outside Brantford.

42. Born as Gary Lee Weinrib in Toronto in 1953, he achieved fame as Geddy Lee in the rock band Rush.

43. Bandleader and composer Percy Faith, born Toronto in 1908, died 1976.

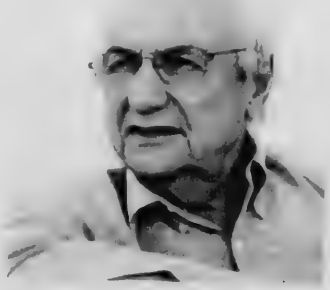
44. Lou Jacobi, born Jacobovitch in Toronto, 1913.

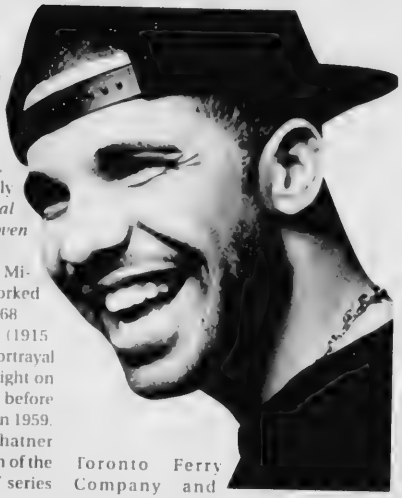
45. Mort Sahl, born Montreal 1927.

46. N. L. Nathanson, actually an American who resettled in Toronto, got his start by purchasing an old theatre on Adelaide Street, the Regent, and converting it into a deluxe movie house.

47. Garth Drabinsky, founder (with Nat Turner) of the famous Cineplex chain of multiplex movie theatres.

48. High-flying Toronto entrepreneur Lol Solman (1866-1931) also owned the Toronto Ferry Company and managed Sunnyside Amusement Park and Loew's theatre chain in Canada.





49. Phil Givens, Toronto's second Jewish mayor, son of a tailor and graduate of Harbord Collegiate and Talmud Torah Eitz Chaim. The biggest battle during his tenure (1963 to 1966) was for the installation of Henry Moore's sculpture *The Archer* outside City Hall.

50. Ace salesman Mel Lastman, proprietor of the Bad Boy furniture chain, became popular mayor of North York, then the whole city of Toronto.

51. Hamilton-born Eugene Levy currently stars in the hit TV show *Schitt's Creek* which he created with his son Dan Levy.

52. David Mirvish, head of Mirvish Productions.

53. Ezekiel Hart of Trois Rivieres, Que., was re-elected in a byelection but again refused to swear as a Christian. Only in 1831 was a bill passed granting Jews equal rights and privileges in Canada.

54. Herb Gray, who was from Windsor, Ont., and also served as deputy prime minister.

55. J. B. Salsberg had also been a popular alderman in the Spadina riding where he lived; he later became wise to the atrocities of the Lenin regime and distanced himself from Soviet communism.

56. Newman Leopold Steiner, who arrived in Toronto about 1856, also served as the first Jewish justice of the peace. He died in 1903 and is buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery.

57. Louis M. Singer graduated from Osgoode Hall in 1908 and was first elected to office in 1914. He returned to practising law in 1917.

58. Gerald Gladstone also created the *Reclining Female* statue for Place Ville Marie in Montreal, the Martin Luther King Memorial in Los Angeles, and the *Universal Man* sculpture in the parking lot of Yorkdale Shopping Mall.

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59. Matti Friedman grew up in Toronto and attended USDS Hebrew school as well as Mackenzie Collegiate.

60. Bernard Allen of Pennsylvania sent sons Jule and J.J. to Brantford to open a nickelodeon, followed by theatres across Canada, including Toronto's Tivoli, Parkdale, College, St. Clair, Beach and Hollywood.

61. Many of the theatres built by the architectural firm of Kaplan & Sprachman featured the "Moderne style" characterized by neon-lit marquees and flowing streamlined curves and surfaces.

62. Norman Levene's story collections include *Canada Made Me* and *Something Happened Here*.

63. Dorothy (Goldstick) Dworkin (1889-1976) also helped found a free Jewish medical dispensary in Toronto and became a noted philanthropist.

64. Samuel Orkin Freedman, born in Montreal in 1928, worked with Phil Gold on this momentous discovery.

65. Rosalie Abella, child of Holocaust survivors, champion of human rights and social justice.

66. Irving Abella, whose books include *Coat of Many Colours* and *None Is Too Many* (written with Harold Troper).

67. Jack Granatstein held the post from 1998 to 2001 and was instrumental in building the museum's new home.

68. Leon Edel (1907-1997) was born in Pittsburgh but grew up in Yorkton, Sask.

69. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, born in Toronto in 1942, was (rightly) described in the *New York Forward* as "The Woman Behind the Polish Jewry Museum."

70. Mayer Kirshenblatt's (1916-2009) paintings, as well as his recollections, were featured in the acclaimed book *They Called Me Mayer July: Painted Memories of a Jewish Childhood*, co-authored with his daughter, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett.

71. The renowned Abraham de Sola (1825-1882) was minister of Montreal's Shearith Israel Congregation and was in-

vited by U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant in 1873 to open the U.S. Congress with prayer.

72. Ruth Wisse's books include *The Shlemiel as a Modern Hero* and *If I Am Not for Myself: The Liberal Betrayal of the Jews*; she has also edited and translated various anthologies of Jewish writings by Sholem Aleichem, I. L. Peretz and Chaim Grade.

73. Emil Ludwig Fackenheim (1916-2003), who escaped Germany in 1939, served as a rabbi in Hamilton, Ont., and studied philosophy at U of T. He was the author of many books and the recipient of many awards.

74. John Polanyi, son of a Jewish father who left the faith, won the award for his work in chemical kinetics, involving a technique of infrared chemiluminescence; he shared the prize with Dudley Herschbach and Yuan T. Lee.

75. Involved in the Manhattan Project, the creation of the atom bomb, Louis Slotin (1910-1946) accidentally began a fission reaction that proved fatal to him.

76. Over a period of nearly three decades, Judy Feld Carr worked in secret to buy passports and visas, and arrange dangerous smuggling operations. "We were buying Jews, one by one, from a hostile government," she explained.

77. Phyllis Barbara Lampert, born in Montreal in 1927, founded the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal to help preserve architectural heritage.

78. Moshe Safdie, born in Haifa during the British Mandate, moved with his family to Montreal; other acclaimed works include Marina Bay Sands and Jewel Changi Airport in Singapore, the Technion Institute in Israel, and Toronto's Pearson Airport.

79. Barry Blitt was born in Cote St-Luc in 1958 and studied at the Ontario College of Art and Design before moving to the U.S. in 1989. He has drawn numerous bitingly satirical covers about Donald Trump for the *New Yorker*.

80. Gershon Iskowitz (1921-1988), survivor of Buchenwald who immigrated to Canada, regarded painting as "just an extension of myself. It's a plastic interpretation of the way I think. You reflect your own vision."

81. Mitch Garber left law for a business career that has proven stellar, with many successful ventures in the United States and Israel. Currently chairman of the Combined Jewish Appeal campaign in Montreal.

82. Louis Rasminsky (1908-1998), born in Montreal and raised in Toronto, was the third governor of the Bank of Canada.

83. Gerald Schwartz also founded Onex Corporation and, along with wife Heather Reisman, started the Heseg Foundation, a scholarship program for IDF "lone soldiers."

84. Alex Shnaider, born 1968, co-founded the Midland Group with Eduard Shifrin, and partnered with Donald Trump on the Trump hotel in Toronto. President of the Jewish Russian Community Centre of Ontario.

85. Avie Bennett (1928-2017).

86. Mark Breslin began as a stand-up comedian who co-founded (with Joel Axler) Yuk Yuk's comedy clubs to make more venues available for comedians. He also works as an actor for TV and movies.

87. Ruth Miriam (Schwartz) Goldbloom (1923-2012), born and raised in New Waterford, N.S., co-founded the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 in Halifax.

88. Paul, Albert and the other Reichmann brothers established Olympia & York, which through savvy real estate investment projects became the largest property development companies in the world (at least for a while).

89. Apotex founder Barry Sherman and his wife Honey were generous philanthropists; the Apotex Foundation has given out more than $50 million worth of medicine to beleaguered countries to date. Their double murder in 2017 remains unsolved.

90. Celia Franca (1921-2007), daughter of a Polish-born tailor in London's East End, was artistic director of the National Ballet for 24 years.

91. Mia Kirshner, born 1975 in Toronto, has played dozens of TV and cinematic roles.

92. Sylvia Lennick (1915-2009) spoke the line in a thick Brooklyn accent for a Wayne & Shuster skit on Ed Sullivan.

93. Seth Rogen, born 1982, made his breakthrough in the Judd Apatow-produced film *Knocked Up* in 2007, which cost $30 million and grossed $219 million.

94. Al Waxman played many leading parts in everything from *Death of a Salesman* to *The Merchant of Venice*, but none brought him more fame than his role in the TV show *King of Kensington*.

95. Helen Weinzweig (1915-2010), Toronto-based author of two novels and numerous stories; was married to composer John Weinzweig.

96. Montreal jazz singer Nikki Yanofsky, born 1994, has a preternatural ability to channel Ella Fitzgerald and other jazz greats.

97. Drake, aka Aubrey Drake Graham, cut his teeth with the *Degrassi* TV series and has had a stellar rap career that has made him easily able to afford his lavish mansion in the Bridle Path area.

98. Toronto author Sheila Heti, born 1976, is the daughter of Hungarian Jewish immigrants. The *New Yorker* called her 2011 novel *The Chairs Are Where the People Go* as "a triumph of conversational philosophy."

99. Toronto writer-poet Anne Michaels wrote expansively in *Fugitive Pieces* about a Holocaust survivor trying to come back to terms with the world.

100. Holocaust survivor Chava Rosenfarb (1923-2011) published her major work, *Der boim fun Lebn* in 1972; later published in English as *The Tree of Life*. ■

INTERNATIONAL

Gantz to seek extension to form government

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF
JERUSALEM

Blue and White Chairman Benny Gantz said on Sunday that he will likely seek an extension of his mandate to form a government, which will expire over the Passover holiday.

He informed Israel's President Reuven Rivlin of his intention during a phone call, Blue and White said in a statement.

Rivlin said he would consider the request, if filed, in light of the circumstances Gantz will present as the April 13 deadline gets closer, according to the statement.

Blue and White said Gantz had also updated Rivlin on the talks to form "an emergency government and national unity" with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud.

Gantz's party has been holding coalition talks with Likud on forming a government in which the two would rotate as premier, with Netanyahu serving first. The negotiations picked up pace after Gantz was elected Knesset speaker with the backing of Netanyahu's right-wing bloc, causing Blue and White to split.

It wasn't clear whether Rivlin would be willing to extend Gantz's mandate since under Israeli law, the Knesset member tasked by the president with forming a government is the one who heads it, and the ongoing negotiations are for a government headed by Netanyahu. (A rotation agreement isn't anchored in Israeli law, and relies on the premier who serves first voluntarily resigning after a certain period of time.)

Netanyahu was forced into quarantine last week after meeting with Health Minister Yaakov Litzman, who was confirmed on April 1 as a COVID-19 carrier. The prime minister met Gantz – albeit at a distance – last Friday to advance negotiations toward a unity government, with both sides saying afterwards that significant progress was made.

The meeting was described as a "positive" one during which "understandings were reached," according to a rare joint statement from their offices. The two party leaders instructed their negotiating teams "to try and bring about a coalition agreement between Blue and White and Likud as soon as possible," it added.

The joint statement itself was seen as a sign of the progress in the talks.

Channel 13 said Gantz sat on the patio of the Prime Minister's Residence and Netanyahu stayed inside. "The conversation featured raised voices," it reported, but of necessity rather than in anger.

Benny Gantz at a press conference last month. FLASH90 PHOTO

In a Facebook post following the meeting, Gantz said that a deal was within reach but that a number of hurdles still remain.

"It is clear to all of us that there is no other alternative for either party [other than a unity deal] and that the State of Israel needs a government," Gantz wrote.

Disagreements over ministerial appointments have been solved, according to Channel 13, with Likud agreeing to Blue and White's top choice of Avi Nissenkorn for justice minister, so long as it has some veto power over the appointment of Supreme Court justices.

Blue and White has also agreed to allow Litzman remain as health minister, despite the growing calls for his ouster over his handling of the virus outbreak and amid allegations – which Litzman denies – that he flouted his own ministry's guidelines on social distancing.

But disputes still remain over the issue of West Bank annexation, according to an official involved in the negotiations.

> *It is clear to all of us that there is no other alternative for either party [other than a unity deal] and that the State of Israel needs a government.*
>
> **Benny Gantz, Blue and White leader**

Netanyahu views the move as a legacy-maker and has been adamant about seeing the election promise through before he hands over to Gantz, as scheduled under the tentative deal, in fall 2021.

Gantz, on the other hand, has long opposed unilateral annexation but recognizes that the right-wing bloc currently has a majority in support for the move, thanks to the votes of Telem defectors Yoaz Hendel and Zvi Hauser as well as Yisrael Beytenu's seven MKs from the Opposition. He therefore is hoping to influence the decision from the powerful position of defence minister, which he is slated to become, Channel 12 reported.

The basis of the "emergency unity government," which Gantz agreed to in principle last month (when he shocked many of his fellow faction members by blocking the nomination of an anti-Netanyahu lawmaker as Knesset speaker), will see the Likud leader stay on as premier for 18 months before being replaced for an equal amount of time by the Blue and White head.

Blue and White was also reportedly seeking to anchor the rotation agreement in law to ensure that Netanyahu vacates the office in late 2021.

Gantz explained at the time that a mixture of the pandemic crisis, the imperative to avoid a fourth round of elections and the threats to Israeli democracy left him no alternative but to abandon his promise to Blue and White voters through three elections not to sit in government with Netanyahu so long as the prime minister faces criminal charges.

As talks faltered last week, Blue and White reportedly threatened to resume a legislative push for a law making it impossible for an indicted MK – such as Netanyahu – to serve as prime minister.

Before Gantz became Knesset speaker, his then-Blue and White partners Yair Lapid and Moshe Ya'alon were pressing to advance legislation barring an indicted lawmaker from being tapped to form a government. The bill would also limit a prime minister to two terms in office.

Lapid and Ya'alon had hoped that as the legislation was being advanced, the Likud leader would agree to a rotational government with Gantz, but with the Blue and White leader serving as prime minister first.

But breaking with his partners, Gantz said he would join a government with Netanyahu and serve as prime minister after the Likud leader, prompting the dissolution of Blue and White and kicking off the coalition talks.

Israel has held three national elections in under a year. ■

Jacob Magid contributed to this report.

Opinion

Litzman failed to explain pandemic to his own community

David Horovitz
JERUSALEM

We don't yet know for sure whether Health Minister Yaakov Litzman flouted his own ministry's guidelines by participating in group prayer in recent days, after a ban on such gatherings had been instituted to prevent the spread of coronavirus contagion.

What we do know is that the leader of the ultra-Orthodox United Torah Judaism (UTJ) party, who has served for almost all of the past decade as Israel's health minister, was strikingly reluctant to acknowledge and internalize the threat posed by the pandemic. He resisted the stringent limitations on public movement his ministry's senior officials sought to impose – stalling regulations that might otherwise have come into effect early last month just before Purim, and pleading in vain with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to allow synagogues to stay open for at least small groups of worshipers standing two metres apart.

Still more reprehensible, however, is the manifest failure of the health-care hierarchy he has headed for so long to effectively communicate to his own ultra-Orthodox sector of the Israeli demographic the imperative to take the virus seriously.

Twenty years ago, the ultra-Orthodox city of Bnei Brak changed the name of much of its central boulevard from (Theodor) Herzl Street to Rabbi (Elazar) Schach Street.

The shift highlighted the ongoing separation of the ultra-Orthodox community from mainstream Israel – underlined by the deepening of a norm whereby most of Israel's young ultra-Orthodox males, rather than performing military or national service and then entering the work force, become full-time Torah scholars.

Most of Israel's ultra-Orthodox Jews live in communities largely separate from the secular and modern-Orthodox mainstream, and largely incommunicado – with no televisions, limited computer access and cellphones modified to keep secular impurity at bay. They heed their rabbis rather than the national political leadership.

Litzman's UTJ, along with the Sephardic ultra-Orthodox party Shas, exist precisely to ensure that the interests of this community are protected. And indeed the skill with which these two parties have used their coalition bargaining power and leverage to champion those interests – notably by fighting off demands that the ultra-Orthodox share the burden of national service – has been a bitter source of tension in Israel for decades.

Health Minister Yaakov Litzman, pictured here with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, at a video conference on March 9. YONATAN SINDEL/FLASH90 PHOTO

With the rise of the coronavirus pandemic, the urgent need was for Litzman, his health-care hierarchy and his fellow ultra-Orthodox politicians to ensure that their electorate was made as aware of the danger as the rest of Israel's more plugged-in society, the better to protect against infection by swiftly heeding the guidelines on social distancing. At this moment of truth, manifestly, tragically, they failed.

Bnei Brak is under a lockdown, having become an epicentre of the virus, with 1,000 of the 7,000 confirmed infections in Israel. (According to one health fund chief, 38 per cent of its almost 200,000 residents may be infected.) Other largely ultra-Orthodox towns and neighbourhoods are emerging with many of the highest rates of contagion nationwide.

It is easy to scapegoat elderly ultra-Orthodox sages and yeshiva heads for failing to swiftly order full co-operation with the "stay home" entreaties issued on a near-nightly basis by Netanyahu in recent weeks. The scene, last month, in which the grandson of the current Lithuanian ultra-Orthodox spiritual leader Chaim Kanievsky asks the rabbi whether school and yeshiva study should halt while the virus is being battled, and Kanievsky, 92, mutters "heaven forbid," ostensibly justifies considerable anger and frustration.

Much of the rest of Israel, largely honouring the restrictions on social movement, and just possibly managing to be thwarting or at least reducing the spread of infection, today finds itself potentially facing a pandemic nightmare ostensibly because 10 per cent of the populace listens to octogenarian and nonagenarian Torah scholars rather than national leaders and their expert healthcare advisers. (Kanievsky changed his stance last week, insisting on no group prayer or study.)

But the principal failure lies with the ultra-Orthodox politicians whose raison d'être should have come to the fore in these last few dreadful weeks. This was their hour to justify their very existence – to prove that working with the Zionist government is essential to the well-being of their community. This was their time of opportunity, and of obligation – to reach out to their own electorate and explain that, no, the instruction to close synagogues and shut down schools and yeshivas was not part of some fiendish new secular Zionist plot aimed at the destruction of Torah study, that must be defied for the sake of the divine.

The ultra-Orthodox community has, as of late, largely, finally, come to understand the gravity of the hour. But as aggrieved spokesmen from within it have been stressing in recent days, the Israeli government failed for weeks to effectively highlight the peril through channels the community would access, understand and respect. Specifically, these spokesmen have said, the outreach should have focused on community rabbis and leaders, savvy people perfectly capable of recognizing the menace, explaining it and ensuring that the necessary precautions were rapidly taken.

An unnamed senior government minister was quoted April 2 accusing Litzman of showing "contempt" for the rules, and of putting the lives of his various leadership colleagues at risk. Since Litzman tested positive late on April 1, the prime minister has had to go back into quarantine.

But while we don't actually know for sure that Litzman personally broke any of the restrictions, we do know that he failed his community. ■

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U.K. Labour leader reaches out to Jewish community

TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF
LONDON

In one of his first acts as the British Labour party's new leader, Keir Starmer sent a letter to the Jewish community last Saturday night expressing his condolences over the high death rate from the coronavirus, and repeating his vow to stamp out anti-Semitism from the party.

"I have been saddened to learn of the particularly high death rate in the Jewish community," he said in a letter to the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

"Please be assured of my sympathy and solidarity at this time, and if there is anything the Labour party can do, please let me know," he wrote.

As of April 5, there were 85 deaths in the U.K. Jewish community from COVID-19, the illness cause by the virus, according to the Board of Deputies, the umbrella organization for British Jewish communities.

Britain on Saturday reported a record 708 daily deaths from the coronavirus, including a five-year-old child who is thought to be the country's youngest victim.

The Health Ministry said 4,313 people who tested positive for the virus in hospitals had died as of last Friday afternoon, while there were 41,903 confirmed cases as of Saturday morning, up 3,735. The toll has been steadily increasing by more than 500 deaths a day this week and the country is bracing for an expected peak in the next week to 10 days.

Starmer, in his letter to the Board of Deputies, also reiterated his commitment to stamping out anti-Semitism, and invited the representative body to meet with him to discuss the matter further.

Asking to set up a videoconference with the Board of Deputies leadership, Starmer said, "I realize there is a long way to go to rebuild trust and that words now need to be accompanied by decisive action. I will be speaking with the Jewish community in the coming days and setting out the steps we will take to root out anti-Semitism once and for all."

On Saturday, April 4, Starmer replaced Jeremy Corbyn as party leader and immediately apologized to the Jewish community for anti-Semitism in Labour's ranks, calling it a "stain" and pledging to stamp it out.

Accusations of anti-Semitism plagued Labour under Corbyn's leadership, and were seen as a significant factor in its 2019 election loss.

British Jews deserted the party in droves, many believing that Labour had become institutionally anti-Semitic under Corbyn, a pro-Palestinian politician who was elected to lead the party in 2015, with widespread accusations that Corbyn himself was an anti-Semite – something he denied.

> *Please be assured of my sympathy and solidarity at this time.*
>
> **Keir Starmer**
> **Labour party leader**

Corbyn was accused of failing to deal with hundreds of incidents of anti-Semitism within his party. A number of former party officials accused him and his allies of interfering in efforts to address the issue, in a BBC program aired last summer.

Corbyn also came under attack for initially refusing to adopt fully the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism in Labour's new code of conduct.

Much of the fear of Corbyn was spurred by revelations about his past record that emerged after he became Labour leader. These included him describing Hamas and Hezbollah as "friends", defending an anti-Semitic mural in East London, and a seeming willingness to associate with alleged anti-Semites, terrorists and Holocaust deniers.

In his victory speech, Starmer acknowledged the party had "a mountain to climb" after four straight general election defeats. But he vowed: "We will climb it."

He called it "the honour and privilege" of his life to be elected and vowed to "engage constructively" with Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government, particularly in the fight against the coronavirus.

"We have to face the future with honesty," he said. "On behalf of the Labour Party, I am sorry... I have seen the grief that [anti-Semitism] brought to so many Jewish communities.

"I will tear out this poison by its roots and judge success by the return of Jewish members and those who felt that they could no longer support us." ■

Times of Israel
Timesofisrael.com

Advice from Ontario's doctors about COVID-19

Ontario's doctors prescribe two highly effective treatments in the fight against COVID-19:

Stay home.
Keep your distance.

With Passover, you will need to celebrate with your family differently this year, as staying home and keeping your distance are the most important contributions you can make to slow the spread of COVID-19 in your communities. It's the best way to protect yourself and your loved ones. Speak with your local Rabbi for additional guidance.

Ontario's Doctors. We'll stay at work for you. Stay home for us.

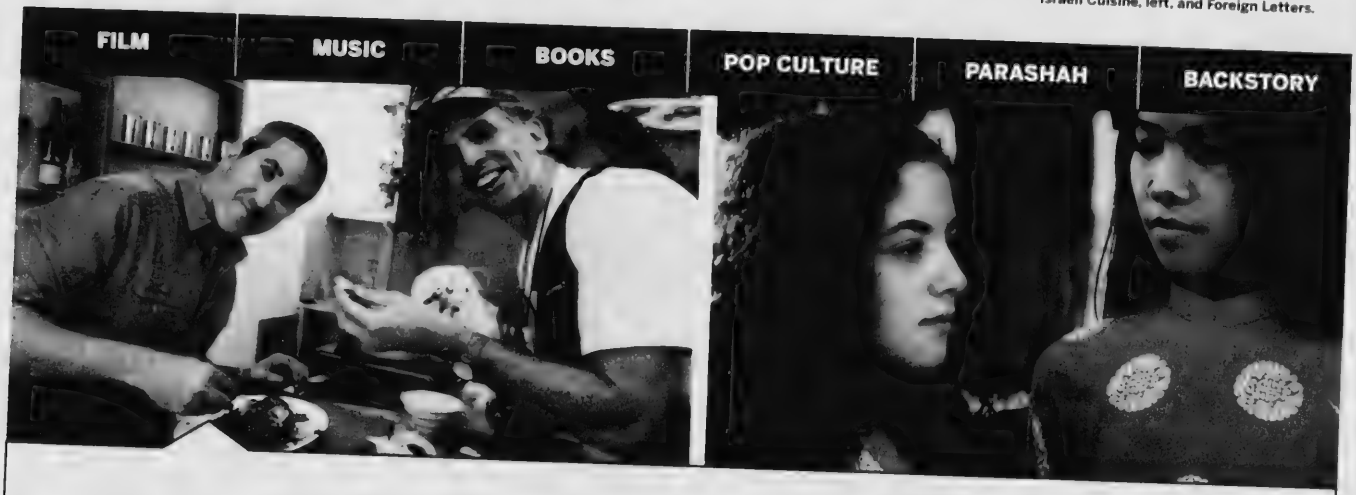
For more information, visit virusfacts.ca

OMA Ontario Medical Association

Ontario's Doctors. We lead you to better health.

Jewish Life

Pictured below: Scenes from In Search of Israeli Cuisine, left, and Foreign Letters.



Jewish movies you should stream while self-isolating

MICHAEL FRAIMAN
mfraiman@thecjn.ca

Though the COVID-19 pandemic has devastated most businesses, streaming networks come out on top, with many platforms reporting massive spikes in traffic and even unprecedented bandwidth issues. While most self-isolating viewers may just be watching that weird tiger show, we wanted to take this opportunity to promote some hidden Jewish gems that felt especially appropriate to the current climate.

In addition to some solid content on Netflix and Amazon Prime Video, we've also added recommendations from Kanopy (an excellent streaming service that's free with a library card), J-flix.com (the free streaming platform from the Toronto Jewish Film Festival) and JVOD.ca (an on-demand Jewish film aggregator based in Canada). For some extra help, we turned to the curators themselves for recommendations.

***Foreign Letters* (J-flix.com)**

If the thought of another Zoom meeting threatens your sanity, enjoy a nostalgic escape to a bygone era that predates the Internet. *Foreign Letters* is an autobiographical coming-of-age film charting the friendship between an Israeli immigrant and a Vietnamese refugee who bond over their shared status as outsiders in a suburban American school in the 1980s. Delicately balancing comedy and drama, this delightful film authentically captures the dynamics of adolescent female friendships. – *Susan Starkman, TJFF programmer and education outreach co-ordinator*

***In Search of Israeli Cuisine* (Prime Video)**

You can't fly to Israel right now, so indulge in the next best thing: a delicious documentary about Israeli food. *In Search of Israeli Cuisine* follows acclaimed chef Michael Solomonov, who pivoted to his heritage after his brother, while volunteering in the Israeli army, was killed on Yom Kippur in 2003. Solomonov is today best known for Zahav, his award-winning restaurant in Philadelphia. In this feature-length documentary, he takes his passion to Israel's streets, meeting the minds behind the nation's well-worked farms, international influences, freshly baked pastries and traditional Jewish cooking.

***Noodle* (J-flix.com)**

When an undocumented Chinese housekeeper is apprehended on the street and deported, the authorities overlook her son, who's still in the house where she worked. One of the employer's family members works for El Al, and agrees to help smuggle the son back to his mother. When *Noodle* screened at the TJFF, we set up a table outside the theatre with platters of noodles, and Evan Solomon filled plates for theatre-goers. So while you're stuck inside, boil some ramen noodles for yourself and dig in while watching this clever gem. – *Helen Zuckerman, TJFF executive director*

***Black Mitzvah* (Netflix)**

Netflix's film library has been likened to the bargain bin of an old Blockbuster. But there are at least two genres the streaming giant has nailed: true crime and stand-up comedy specials. (Incidentally, both appear on this list.) Here we have the latest special by the African-American and Jewish Tiffany Haddish, who celebrates her unique identity right there in the title, kick-starting her hour-long set by singing "Havah Nagilah" and being carried in on a giant chair. There is, admittedly, not too much Jewish content after that, but by then she'll have won over any skeptical Jewish viewers. And for any non-Jewish viewers: look, Haddish is just really damn funny, and we all need a little comedy during quarantine.

***Jerusalem ER* (JVOD.ca)**

If anyone needs a reminder of how stressful life is for health-care professionals during the COVID-19 outbreak, this short documentary offers a glimpse into a normal day in an Israeli hospital. It focuses on two doctors who feel like outsiders in their own environments: Dr. Stalnikowicz, a Chilean who moved to Israel in 1973, and Dr. Salameh, an Arab-Israeli doctor. *Jerusalem ER* is a poignant look at race relations and geopolitics through the lens of emergency health.

***Zero Motivation* (Kanopy)**

If you think you're bored at home, try being stuck in a bureaucratic office doing nothing all day. That's the premise

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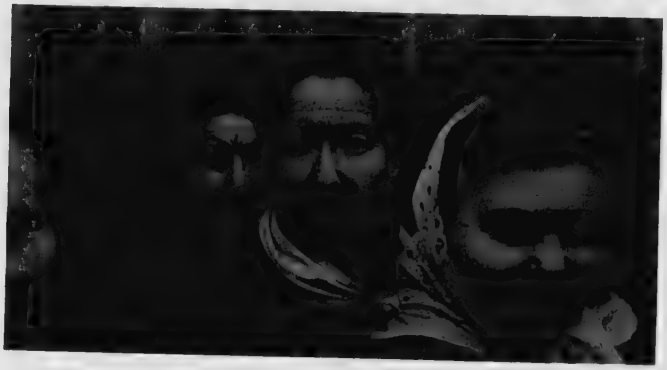

Noodle runs on TJFF's free streaming platform J-flix.com

behind *Zero Motivation*, which we film critics at *The CJN* agreed was one of the best Jewish films of the last decade. This deadpan Israeli comedy follows a group of female soldiers effectively trapped on a base in the middle of the desert, balancing boredom, ambition and friendship with endless paper shredding and games of Minesweeper. It's wickedly funny.

Every Face Has a Name **(J-flix.com)**

After the Second World War, the Red Cross ran a program called White Buses. About 10,000 survivors of concentration camps were brought over by boat to Malmo, Sweden. As they exited, newsreels documented their arrival to freedom. Decades later, filmmaker Magnus Gertten tracked down some of the surviving refugees and showed them the film. As they watched, many memories arose of friends and relationships and their stories, weaving a story as heart-wrenching as it is heart-warming. – *Helen Zuckerman, TJFF executive director*

Picture above, from top, scenes from Zero Motivation, Every Face Has a Name, and The Devil Next Door.

The Devil Next Door **(Netflix)**

Okay, so this isn't a movie. But this binge-worthy, five-part mini-series will definitely keep you engaged – and educated – while you're stuck at home. It documents the life and international trials of the elderly John Demjanjuk, who was accused of being a hidden Nazi concentration camp guard known as "Ivan the Terrible". After more than three decades and multiple conflicting verdicts and appeals, Demjanjuk died in prison, allowing these documentarians to wade through countless legal documents and interview numerous family members, key figures from the trial and experts who followed the case. As both a historical document and a true-crime tale, it's a gripping story. ■

"It is my fervent wish that Passover indeed be the beginning of a season of freedom and with the healing that is sure to come, we will enjoy a renewal of family and friendships as soon as it is safe to do so"
Toronto City Councillor
MIKE COLLE
Ward 8, Eglinton-Lawrence
(416) 338-0008
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THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
APRIL 9, 2020

Stories explore relationships between family, friends

MORDECHAI BEN-DAT
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

This One Because of the Dead
By Laure Baudot

(Cormorant Press, 2019)

This One Because of The Dead, Laure Baudot's first anthology of short stories, was published one year ago. The Toronto-based author, however, had been writing long before the appearance of this debut collection. Her works have appeared in a variety of literary journals and magazines. But as she cannily noted about herself, she decided at a young age that becoming a writer "wasn't a practical decision."

Years later Baudot changed her mind. After a decade working in academia, with writing as a sideline, Baudot rescinded her youthful decision, restoring to a more central place in her busy life the vocation that was preeminent in her soul.

Baudot is a mother of three as well as an author and a martial arts instructor. Her somewhat unconventional combination of activities, jumbled parental schedules and responsibilities, together with her rugged imagination and sharply delivered insights, often yield provocative stories and an occasional kick to the emotional solar plexus.

This One Because of The Dead brings together 12 stories, which primarily explore the terrain of close, sometimes intimate, interrelationships between family members or friends. Baudot depicts an impressive, eclectic range of storylines and situations. The title of the collection takes its name from a reference in a story that is the self-motivation for a mountain climber to conquer the summit of Mount Everest.

We meet a daughter of Holocaust survivors whose ongoing, obsessive effort to paint the definitive post-Holocaust work interferes with her relationship with her teenage daughter. And we travel with a young couple to Ethiopia in search of a child they hope to adopt. In yet another story, we accompany a young executive from Toronto on a crucial business trip to Tokyo.

These are a representative sampling of the wide string of the pearls of Baudot's imagination. Irrespective of the geographic centre of the stories, the heart of each piece is the terrain of human insecurity, anxiety and the constant search for that comfortable promontory of individual contentedness within key relationships.

Though not exclusively, in the main, Baudot's central characters are young. They are adults at the beginning stages of family life, in their careers, or seeking careers. Others are not quite fully adult. We encounter a babysitter, camp counsellors and teenagers enjoying the summer at the cottage.

Similarly, most of Baudot's characters are vigorously engaged with the outdoors, either as explorers, hikers, climbers or travellers in some form. They are adventurers, though some of them only reluctantly. The tension between characters is the vein of psychology, emotion, aspiration, wishful thinking, self-delusion and self-assertion from which Baudot mines the shining nuggets that form her stories.

She occasionally jolts the reader. A story unfolds along foreseeable lines and then suddenly at the end of the story, Baudot surprises the reader with a deliberately placed ambiguity, a clear implication of something unforeseen.

Baudot is a clever writer, presenting ideas with nuanced argument. For example, in "Siblings", the teenager Sonya is spending time at her neighbours' summer home. Her hosts, Arnold and Asta, have invited a guest, Mrs. Thomas, to dinner. The conversation at the table turns to Sonya's mother, Joy, who is an artist.

"Joy has a growing reputation," says Arnold. "She is a descendant of survivors. What the Jews call the Shoah."

"I always forget that you're a historian," Mrs. Thomas says. "I wonder though, if there's anything else to say about the Holocaust."

Sonya sees herself as a tiny figure pummelling Mrs. Thomas's face, which is as dense as an acorn. Words fly within her mind like mosquitos and she has trouble choosing which ones to put to Mrs. Thomas. It's always like this, not finding the thing that fits, not being able to defend her mother when people say things about her.

"If someone is saying something more about it, then there's more to say," says Asta.

"Well." Mrs. Thomas picks up her fork and tidies pork chop bundles into her mouth."

Baudot uses spare, tight, clipped prose to capture the essence of the person whose true attitude toward Jews many readers recognize and which Baudot expertly unmasks in a mere handful of words.

The opening paragraph of the story, "Luck", demonstrates how Baudot, with her characteristic economic prose, skillfully reveals a great deal about a narrator we have just met.

"When Noreen compliments Alison on her cake, Alison smiles a tiny, hardwood canoe of a smile at odds with her pudgy, optimistic face, a face that used to look on the world as if it were one long drink of water. I recognize this smile from the days before I had Archana, back when people told me that losing my pregnancies was for the best."

In another story, "Stage Presence", Baudot reflects upon preparation for entering high school. "At one time or another, we've all thought of high school as a space of possibility. The evening before my daughter started Grade 9, she talked about the outfit she would wear, as if by wearing the right thing she could control what would happen to her in the subsequent four years. As if overnight, she would become someone other than who she was. Children think they can perpetually make themselves up. They're optimists that way."

There is an imperturbable quality to Baudot's writing. Like some of the characters she has created, she boldly explores the clutter and untidiness of human imperfections. She does not shy away from portraying those imperfections, despite the dark and discomforting corridors of human existence where they occasionally lead her characters.

One might expect some examples of happiness, fulfilment and reward in a collection of 12 stories. But the writer's prerogative is to tell the stories she wants, not necessarily those that this reader might also like to read. At the end of the book, we must certainly acknowledge Baudot's literary gifts: imagination, skill and insight. ■

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Veteran singer returns with toxic single

RUTH SCHWEITZER
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

As a response to the clean-air movement and the U.S. government's denial of climate change, Peter Foldy, a Canadian singer, songwriter and filmmaker based in Los Angeles, wrote the pop song "Toxic World."

Released in the fall of 2019 to positive reviews, "Toxic World" is a socially conscious love song. It got airplay on Canadian radio stations and recently charted at No. 27 on the Quebec Anglo Top 100.

Now, with the spread of the coronavirus, the song is more relevant than ever. "I was kind of ahead of the curve in calling it 'Toxic World,'" Foldy said.

Foldy has a gift for writing upbeat pop songs with catchy melodies. His first single, "Bondi Junction" topped the charts in the early 70s. Despite the serious subject of "Toxic World," released on Foldy's Bronte Road label, it's a toe-tapper. And the melody has earworm potential.

"Good songs just come to you," he said. "They're almost like a gift. They come from somewhere and you just write them."

On the heels of the success of "Toxic World," he's recorded a followup with the working title "The Friend Zone," about a guy who likes a girl who just wants to be friends.

Peter Foldy

When Foldy releases the song, he's planning to concentrate on streaming services rather than radio, he said. "Toxic World" got nearly 14,000 streams on Spotify.

It's hard to get songs on radio these days because radio stations can satisfy Canadian content requirements by playing big name artists, he said. "Even if they play a song, they play it only once every two days."

"Bondi Junction," was played 10 to 15 times a day on every radio station in Canada, because almost every Canadian station was a Top 40 station in 1973. "You could make a decent living just off the airplay alone," he said. A song about a fragile first love, it rose to No. 1 on the Canadian music charts and garnered two Juno nominations.

Bondi Junction is a suburb of Sydney, Australia, where Foldy and his family landed after fleeing Hungary. They went on to settle in Toronto, where Foldy played in a bar band, singing covers by the Beatles and the Bee Gees, while attending film school.

He shopped a demo, which included "Bondi Junction," to several record companies and to his surprise, a small, independent label signed him. The tune charted on Billboard and Cashbox in the United States as well.

By the early '80s, after he'd had several more Top 10 hits, Foldy moved to L.A., then the epicentre of America's music universe. But after his label went out of business, he found himself selling chocolate mints over the phone four hours a day to pay the rent.

"In the afternoons I did what everyone else does in L.A., I started writing a screenplay," he wrote in *british-weekly.com*. A teen comedy he wrote was his entree into the film industry there and he went on to produce and direct many feature films since 1985.

But Foldy never lost his musical aspirations, releasing a *Best of Peter Foldy* album in 2008. When he uploaded a video of "Bondi Junction" to YouTube in 2010, he realized how important the song had been to his fans

One viewer reminisced about his own first love. He wrote, "That's it, you find your first love, you think it's forever, it rarely lasts, and maybe you look back and reminisce. Surely, you never forget it!"

The feedback from his YouTube audience got Foldy back into songwriting, and in 2014 he released a well-received album, *Nine Lives*, a collection of 10 original songs.

"I'm happiest when I'm in the recording studio," he said. "It's just a great feeling to be there and to make music."

The video, "Toxic World," directed by Joel Gouveia, is on YouTube and the song is on Spotify and Apple Music. Visit peterfoldy.com. ■

Socalled is trying to make the best of his downtime

DAVID SILVERBERG
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Like many Canadian musicians and artists, Josh Dolgin is excited to perform in front of his fans. But when the COVID-19 crisis struck, his world was upended when venues cancelled his gigs, resulting in a financial hit and more downtime than he expected.

Thing is, Montreal-based Dolgin – a rapper, singer, producer and pianist who you might know as Socalled – isn't wallowing in self-pity over the cancelled tour. He's taking the time to level up his skills and focus on what he does best: making music, particularly music infused with Yiddishkeit.

His latest show to be cancelled was "Socalled Sings Di Frosh" scheduled for April 23 at Toronto's George Weston Recital Hall.

The musician best known for blending hip-hop with klezmer was poised to return to Toronto with his "Di Frosh" show, which he brought to the city for the 2018 Ashkenaz Festival.

"Di Frosh" is one of Dolgin's many projects underway, but it holds a special place in his repertoire because it allowed him to showcase Yiddish songs rarely seeing the light of the stage. "I chose Yiddish songs with nice four-part harmonies and worked with a string quartet on arrangement that fit the songs," Dolgin says in an interview while under self-quarantine in his Montreal home after playing at a klezmer festival in Germany.

"Di Frosh came out of my love for Yiddish," he adds. "It's an archeological exercise to dig through these old songs and slow them down and hear every single detail."

If you've seen Socalled live, it's obvious he's enthusiastic about singing Yiddish and sharing his passion for the language with his audience, but isn't it challenging to actually play the music and sing the words when you weren't raised in a Yiddish-speaking home?

"When I got into klezmer, I learned how to ornament the music with, say, trills and ghost notes and dreidelach, which is turning the note around, in a way," Dolgin says. "When I analyze the Yiddish words and melodies, I have to ensure the words are clear, that I enunciate every syllable."

Canadian venues may once again hear Di Frosh once this worldwide quarantine subsides (or audiences can enjoy his music on Spotify and iTunes) but until these policies are lifted Dolgin is shifting his energy to rehearsing his pianist skills and making beats, stemming from his love of hip-hop.

Josh Dolgin

"These beats I create become the stepping-off point for creating songs. I'll make the beats and my favourite ones get worked into proper productions for a new Socalled album, which I'm overdue putting out," he says.

He goes on to explain that as a longtime fan of vinyl, he's collected more than 8,000 records, which includes a "ton of Yiddish vinyl, Israeli records, cantorial music, klezmer and Hasidic stuff. I don't exclusively sample from these but they do serve as the most personal source of things to nab."

These days, many self-isolating musicians are turning to video apps like Zoom or Instagram Live to bring music to their fans, but Dolgin won't be taking part in these online shows anytime soon.

"Power to these people and their spirit, but I can't really get in that headspace for some reason. I'm old fashioned. Something feels phony about it all. And it all feels so self-indulgent at a time like this, even though I understand audiences are craving for 'content', and have lost so much by not being able to go out," Dolgin says.

"What can I say, I like sound created in spaces, in collaboration with other creators. For now, I'm practising, studying, arranging, holding out for a world where groups of actual humans can gather to share in musical or theatrical experiences in real places in real time."■

THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS
APRIL 9, 2020

Pop Culture

Unorthodox shines despite usual 'Othodexit' beats

Michael Fraiman

It's not surprising that most films and TV shows featuring Hasidic Jews paint them as villains. They're not cartoonish moustache-twirlers per se, but usually religious zealots plotting to thwart the protagonist's goal, which is invariably escaping their insular community. As a cultural critic, I've seen this tired tale more times than I care to count; you might call it the "Orthodexit" genre.

Hasidism is, in reality, a small and often racially targeted minority. In art, it becomes an oppressively patriarchal monolith. I understand the logic behind this depiction: the religious restrictions are overwhelming, while the stigma of leaving is horrifying. While secular liberal Jews like myself might point to proudly religious communities as proof of the success of western liberal democracy, anyone born into it, ironically, lacks the fundamental freedom of choice that the rest of us westerners appreciate.

To sum up this preamble, I'm never terribly excited to watch stories about rebels leaving ultra-Orthodoxy, and find the trope by this point a little rote.

Which brings me to *Unorthodox*, the new Netflix limited series (four, hour-long episodes), based on a true story, about a young woman's escape from New York's Satmar community into the arms of the freewheeling, beach-diving, music-playing international hipsters of Berlin.

The show, according to Netflix's opaque charting system, is one of the most popular in Canada right now, and it's also the first Netflix-produced show to be written mostly in Yiddish. (I suspect it's because of the success of *Shtisel*, which is originally an Israeli program.)

In more ways than I anticipated, and which you can probably guess from my brief description, *Unorthodox* hits the usual Orthodexit beats. There are slow, long shots of protagonist Esty (Israeli actress Shira Haas, of *Shtisel* fame) staring out of car windows, fighting back tears. There are domineering black-hat men commanding her return. There are frightened Orthodox women with worried looks in their eyes. There is a scene in the first episode where Esty wades into a lake in Berlin, throws off her *sheitel*, and cries at her spiritual rebirth, as if dipping into a secular mikveh.

But here's the thing: *Unorthodox* is also quite good. It's exceptionally well paced, a credit to the co-creator duo of Anna Winger and Alexa Karolinski, who dwell on pivotal moments just long enough for them to resonate, but not so long that they get boring. (This is in fact a very fine line, especially in these sorts of stories.)

Haas is a masterful contortionist of facial and body language. The plot develops steadily, unfolding tantalizing revelations about Esty's past throughout the series, rather than all at once, adding a much-needed air of mystery. It all works together quite nicely.

Part of me feels guilty about liking the show so much, because what makes it great TV is likely what would offend Hasidic viewers: it doesn't paint them kindly. You don't need to look further than Wikipedia to learn that the whole "escape to Berlin" plot is invented; the real-life woman, Deborah Feldman, didn't move to Germany until years after her incremental exit from the community. Writing in *Forward*, former Satmar member Frieda Vizel slams the show as "grossly inaccurate", saying the real community is "a lively world of gossip, drama, peer pressure, materialism, competition, family and busybody neighbours. The people in *Unorthodox* are not that."

This is especially problematic because the show is very clearly geared toward broadly non-Jewish audiences. I fear its portrayal of Hasidic Jews reinforces harmful stereotypes, which in turn gives a plausible defence to the Hasidim themselves, who can brush this off as just another lefty smear campaign that doesn't represent reality.

It's a difficult question: how do you legitimately criticize a system without engendering bigotry? The creators of *Unorthodox* chose their side. They also made a great show. Great shows need villains, of course – it's just a shame Hasidim are easy targets. ■

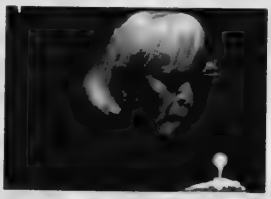
Happy belated 12th birthday to Michael Heilbronn, beloved saba, dad, husband, friend, and future life partner of Charlize Theron

Mazel tov, Joshua Kligerman, on your bar mitzvah, celebrated virtually on March 29. You make us proud of you every single day, and especially on this day

Mazel tov to Maeva on her second birthday, from Mum and Dad, siblings Eviva and Ezra, grandparents Arnie and Fay Niederhoffer, Arnie and Dessa Sadovnick and families

Trudi Mondrow reached her 85th birthday on March 15. On this significant milestone, family and friends sent best wishes for many happy returns in good health

Wishing Henry Eigenmacht a very happy 100th birthday on April 21. Wishing you continued good health and happiness, with love from your children and grandchildren



Happy chai times five to Barbara Usher. Wishing you health and happiness. Love, your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Happy 95th birthday to Zayde Marvin Woznica. May there be many, many more. With love from the Abrams and Woznica families, your extended family and friends.

Happy seventh birthday to our adorable son, Ephram Gabriel Winter Love, Mom, Dad and big brother Sam!

How philosophy and theology can be in dialogue together

JONATHAN L. MILEVSKY
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

For someone with David Novak's reputation, having been writing about Jewish theology and law since the early 1970's, his subsequent publications need not lay the groundwork for new ideas. He can simply further develop what he's already established, namely, a method of talking about Jewish theology in a way that engages with philosophy, is meaningful to theologians of other faiths, and is pertinent to the public square.

His latest book, *Jerusalem and Athens* belongs in the first category. Since it is a comparative study, however, it means that Novak gets to demonstrate his thorough grasp of Greek and German philosophy in addition to his mastery of Jewish theology. The book is based on the Gifford Lectures, which he delivered in 2017. The purpose of the text is to show how philosophy and theology can be in dialogue with one another without subsuming or excluding each other.

The book is geared towards academics, inasmuch as the majority of the text is dedicated to dense metaphysical questions.

The book includes six chapters: the first builds on philosopher Leo Strauss' analysis of the interaction between philosophy and theology; the second concerns the relationship between God and nature and associated concepts, such as God's immutability and miracles; the third chapter is a discussion of the relationship between humans and nature; the fourth chapter deals with the ideas of Philo of Alexandria vis-a -vis those of Plato, with a particular focuses on the relationship between theory and praxis; the fifth is a sustained study of Aristotle's causes, and Maimonides' incorporation of several of them; and the final chapter relates to the influence of Kant on Hermann Cohen, the Jewish philosopher who has adapted much of his moral framework.

In the final three chapters, Novak organizes the views of each thinker into a discourse on four relationships – humans and God, humans and other humans, God and nature, and humans and nature. Given that the Jewish thinkers treated in subsequent chapters do not build on those discussed in previous ones, certainly not in the case of Maimonides and Philo, it is best to see the book as collection of distinct essays, each offering its own rewards.

Athens and Jerusalem
by David Novak
University of Toronto Press

The first chapter includes an interesting insight into the common ground shared by philosophy and theology, such as the fact that they both begin with givens and both are subject to "rational explication." The second chapter has a contemporary feel, as can be seen when Novak touches on "orthodox" environmentalists, who he describes as embracing a "strange God." Considering the relative dearth of philosophical engagement with his work, the book's chapter on Philo, and the helpful way that Novak situates him in the context of the Jewish community in Ptolemaic Egypt, is an important contribution.

The following chapter makes a few subtle distinctions between Maimonides and Aristotle's philosophies. The question the reader is left with, however, is that, since Novak also states that Maimonides' thought is based on a metaphysical model that is no longer valid, how much of these ideas can or should still have a bearing on Jewish thought.

No such problem exists with respect to Immanuel Kant, who Novak treats in the final chapter. Novak convincingly shows that, unlike Maimonides, Kant is still relevant, not only because of the emphasis he puts on universality but also on his focus on law, which sounds to Jews like a mitzvah. Here Novak draws a slightly problematic parallel: Novak states that, just as for Kant, our knowledge, or limitation thereof, plays itself out in ethics, since we cannot know others in themselves and must respect them, so too the Jewish view of nature describes it as something we have no dominance over. Nevertheless, there is little evidence that it is our knowledge of nature, rather than our susceptibility to it, that is at issue in the pertinent Jewish sources.

Novak then moves on to show how Hermann Cohen builds on Kant's ideas. In a discussion that touches on the famous "Euthyphro dilemma" (are we to follow what is just because God commands us, or because it is just?) Novak explains that Cohen's view, which is that "goodness" itself is what commands human beings, results in the problematic position that God is subordinate to goodness. While this is a well argued point, the transition into Cohen is a little hasty and is somewhat incongruent with the other chapters, inasmuch as they feature a Jewish thinker who responds to philosophy, rather than incorporate it wholesale.

Novak touches on Cohen's view of the messianic age. This position is explained in the context of Cohen's response to communistic materialism but also to Zionism. This point raises a fascinating discussion on Novak's own view of redemption, which he describes as distinct from, and not conditional upon, the Zionist project. Seemingly as a foil to Kant, Novak then discusses Franz Rosenzweig, for whom, a direct relationship with God is possible.

Novak concludes the chapter by showing that the relationship between humans and that between humans and nature are not reducible to each other, even if they are all ultimately for the purpose of the relationship with God.

Despite these occasional opinions, the preponderance of the text is comprised of a sustained engagement with the primary sources, and that makes it stand out from Novak's oeuvre. Nevertheless, the analysis is worthwhile for anyone who wants to know what those often quoted philosophers actually say. ■

Jonathan L. Milevsky holds a PhD in religious sudies from McMaster University. His book on David Novak's natural law theory, will be published by Brill next year.

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Parashah

Pesach | Exodus 33:12-34:26

Joshua Schwartz asks "this maror that we are eating, for what purpose?"
Rabbi Avram Rothman says focus on unity in times of major disruption
Rachael Turkienicz compares and contrasts Passover with Yom Kippur

Joshua Schwartz

Perhaps the most scandalous element of the seder ritual is the inclusion, consumption and obligation to discuss maror, the bitter herb. "This maror that we are eating, for what purpose?" This is one of the three essential questions at the seder that, if not asked, disqualify one's fulfilment of the mitzvah.

It is scandalous, for is this not the feast of freedom? Are we not celebrating our liberation from slavery? And yet, during the seder, we are commanded to recall the harshness of servitude, the trauma of oppression inflicted on us by a truly wicked society.

The maror itself is a mnemonic trigger, its bitterness catalyzing a sensory experience of pain. It is a time machine contained in a root, as the stinging tears it evokes have us not only remember, but re-experience the constitutive pain of our birth as a nation, the first-hand account of societal oppression that structured our ethics and religion. We cannot forget, lest we lose ourselves and our values in the process.

Perhaps at this moment, when our community – indeed, the whole world – is in the throes of a global crisis ripping through the fabric of our lives, this demand to feel pain seems inappropriate. After all, are we not feeling enough pain, anxiety and fear?

However, I would argue that the maror is more needed now than ever. When pain hits us, we want to repress or deny it, but we must turn and face our pain if we are to find healing.

The *Sod Yesharim* wrote that the reason for eating this bitter thing is that one can only find redemption when one feels the bitterness of exile. One gains compassionate knowledge of how one is feeling, and also what one needs. Only by facing our hurt can we learn what it is we need, so we can give voice to that pain, let it speak and open up a path for healing as we move forward. ■

Joshua Schwartz is the spiritual leader of Beth Lida Forest Hill Synagogue.

Rabbi Avram Rothman

Being separated from the community, shul and all the people we interact with is the opposite of the fundamental goal of Judaism: unity.

Sitting in our own homes, with no social gatherings or minyanim, unable to invite our own married children for seder, for the sake of our own health, we depart from any sense of unity.

The Torah teaches us that someone who acts in a manner that disrupts community is required to live outside of the city and not re-enter until they change their ways. This person – for example, someone who speaks *lashon hara* – is required to move outside the Jewish encampment.

Today, we all are living outside the community. Stores are closed, shuls are shuttered. We can't take kids to the park or have lunch with a friend.

While no one can tell us why God is doing this, we can learn from the symbols of what this plague we are living with is causing. Just as we are currently unable to attend a funeral, baby naming, bar mitzvah or wedding, no one attends the celebrations of a person who destroys unity, and no one is there to mourn with or for him.

In a way, ha-Shem is sending a message to us that unity is essential, and He is giving us a taste of what the world is like without it.

As a community rabbi, I see the pain on the face of a son forced to sit shivah alone, the tears of a child who won't have his fifth birthday party, and the anxiety of a bride wondering what will be with the beautiful fairy tale wedding she has always wanted.

It is a bitter lesson to accept, but it is a message. The Almighty is showing us what life is like without community, hoping we will act.

Let us use this time to reach out, call someone, reconnect. Keep the elderly in mind and be there to assist. Let's start building unity now internally, for the day is getting closer that we will have the ability to finally create the community we always knew we could. ■

Rabbi Avram Rothman is the senior rabbi of the Aish Thornhill Community Shul in Toronto.

Rachael Turkienicz

As Passover has begun, this week's Torah reading is from Exodus. Moses requests to see the Divine Glory and God responds with a list of divine attributes that enters Jewish prayer and becomes the foundation for *mussar*, the Jewish approach to ethics.

This same list is repeated several times on Yom Kippur. In fact, the Talmud sometimes links aspects of Yom Kippur and Passover that highlight interesting nuances. But the two holidays reflect opposing perspectives. Yom Kippur has no food or drink, while Passover includes a feast and at least four cups of wine. Yom Kippur speaks of our future, while Passover reflects our past. Yom Kippur focuses on our personal journeys, while Passover focuses on our national journey. Yom Kippur turns our attention to our dialogue with God, more than our connections with each other, while Passover reinforces our connections with each other and less of our dialogue with God. Yom Kippur allows us reflection on our past, while Passover allows us to create relevance to our past as we reflect on our present.

And yet, the common element of both is the list of the Thirteen Divine Attributes that we are meant to emulate. They include nuances of compassion, forgiveness, patience, support and strength. It is not the characteristics themselves that are defining, rather the measurement of that characteristic, the minimum or maximum of that trait.

When the nation first experienced Passover, we were told to celebrate in our households. While the households were defining, Moses was told to approach God alone. The measures of togetherness and the measures of isolation are both in the Torah, they are both holy and they are both intrinsically part of our Jewish identities.

In these challenging times of personal distancing and isolation, it is comforting to turn to our Jewish heritage and recognize what we see. The Torah reading contains the key by showing how we adjust for the moments that need community even within the moments that require isolation. ■

Rachael Turkienicz is the executive director of Rachael's Centre in Toronto (rachaelscentre.com).

Ari Greenwald: Responding to a pandemic

ALEX ROSE
arose@thecjn.ca

Ari Greenwald is an emergency physician and the medical director of Hatzoloh Toronto, a non-profit that responds to emergency medical needs in the Jewish community. He spoke to *The CJN* on April 3 about the community's response to COVID-19.

What have you been seeing the last few weeks?

So, in emergency departments, we're seeing more cases of COVID-19. Some of these people are presenting what might be described as typical symptoms, like fever, shortness of breath, cough or muscle aches, sore throat or diarrhea. And many of them are presenting with quite mild symptoms. We're also seeing people who are coming in with significant shortness of breath, low oxygen levels, confusion, who are requiring urgent resuscitation and intubation, and those numbers are starting to grow.

Some people are coming in with other medical illnesses like appendicitis or head injuries, and we find that they actually have COVID-19, although they had no symptoms. This is particularly concerning because it means that there are a lot of asymptomatic people who don't really have any symptoms at all, but who clearly have the disease. We go ahead and test them and treat them accordingly. But they're not coming in for COVID-19; they're coming in for other medical issues.

So, this tells us that there are a fair amount of asymptomatic carriers out there. We already know it's passing between members of the community without them knowing it. This makes us in the healthcare sector very concerned that our numbers are going to start to grow very rapidly over the next short period of time, similar to what we're seeing in other countries.

What have you seen in terms of the response from people in Toronto, and especially in the Jewish community?

I think the majority of people in Toronto, and within the Jewish community in particular, are getting that message and recognizing how important it is to not go out if not necessary, to keep distance, keep your hands clean, not touch your face. They're getting that message and they're taking it very seriously.

There are some people who aren't getting that message as clearly, so it's an ongoing effort to make sure that everybody's getting on the same page with this and recognizing how serious this is. Right now, we're at a stage where case numbers and people who are getting sick are becoming known. That's starting to have an impact on people's behaviors in an important way, to prevent further disease transmission.

But I think some people might still have the perception that this isn't so bad, that we're not nearly as bad as other places like New York, and we're doing well enough that it's not going to get to that point. That is a false assumption and a scary one, because if we let our guard down now, and we don't continue to really be vigilant about preventing any potential transmission, we're going to be seeing the consequences of that in two to four weeks. By that point, it's going to be too late to do anything about it.

What would you say to the people who aren't taking it as seriously?

Yes, it's true that most people who get this will not have severe symptoms. Yes, it's true that we've been doing a good job until now, for the most part, and people have been taking appropriate precautions. But the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) and public health recommendations are changing as we learn more about the virus. So, for example, we've recently learned that people who have had COVID-19 can be transmitting it for up

Ari Greenwald

to three weeks after they become asymptomatic. We also know that there's asymptomatic transmission going around. We don't know how much there is because it's really hard to know who has it when they don't have symptoms, but we know that you can feel totally fine, yet have the virus and spread it to other people. We also know that the testing isn't perfect.

So, all those things combined mean that we all need to act right now as if each of us has it. Each of us could be exposed to it from any interactions we're having with others. Any interactions that we can avoid and any precautions we can take now will have very meaningful effects and will save lives. People who have been inside for 14 days, it hasn't been easy, but now's not the time to say 'OK, I've been inside, I feel fine. It's time for me to go out.'

There is no foolproof way to know whether you are exposing others to the virus that you're carrying, and vice versa. The only thing that we know that works is physical distancing. It's not medicine, it's physical distancing. That is the simple way to keep this from spreading. And it doesn't mean you need to lock yourself inside and stay home all the time. But it does mean that we need to take every necessary precaution to prevent things from proceeding further than they already have.

What is Jewish leadership saying about our obligations?

I think the rabbinic community has been great, coming out very strongly. There's unanimous messaging around not going to minyanim. There's unanimous messaging around not traveling to be with family for Pesach. And there's very strong messaging around not having Pesach seders with family members and others you do not live with. I hope the Jewish community will hear these messages that are coming from the rabbinical leaders, as they are based on the unanimous guidance of the medical community, which is based on the lessons that we've learned from other countries.

I have faith that we're going to get through this and be spared from everything that's happening in other places because we're hopefully learning from them. But it requires us to make difficult decisions. It requires us to not spend Pesach in the ways that we're used to, and that we would love to. Pesach is a time when we're used to being with family and telling the story of how we became a nation together. This is an important part of our tradition. Unfortunately, this year, that tradition has to be done with your members of your household only. Some people are going to unfortunately be spending the Pesach seder by themselves.

But everybody who's making those difficult decisions should know that, in doing so, they're helping to save lives. It's really a demonstration of how much we care for one another, how much we care for our loved ones, how concerned we are for our community health and well-being. I can't think of a more powerful statement to make during the holiday of Pesach, than to say that we are making these very difficult decisions for the benefit of everybody else. ■

This interview has been edited and condensed for clarity and content.

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Mr. Cohen: The silent hero of Operation Torch

EROL ARAF

In the spring of 1942, the Allies got wind that Spain might finally join the Axis. This would have posed colossal problems for Operation Torch, the forthcoming Anglo-American landings in Morocco and Algeria. The stakes could not have been higher.

It was therefore essential to keep track of Spanish decision-making, and Madrid's Embassy in Washington was the ideal place.

Bill Donovan's Office of Strategic Services (OSS) – precursor to the CIA – and the British MI-6, decided to burgle the embassy to get their hands on the cipher machine. But since the device was hidden in a safe, they needed a reliable locksmith to solve the problem.

Enter Mr. G.B. Cohen, owner of a junk-shop in New York. "A little pot-bellied Jew with curly grey hair on which his battered derby sat like a chicken on its nest," Donald Chase Downes, of the OSS, recalled when sent to make discreet inquiries about the operation. The agent told Cohen the story and asked how much he needed to be paid for the job. The locksmith's reaction is related by Anthony Cave Brown in his magisterial book *The Last Hero: Wild Bill Donovan*.

"Paid!" Cohen screamed. "You have come to my place to insult me. Don't I have two nephews in the Army? Ain't I American as much as you? Aren't you ashamed? Pay me? Even a ticket to Washington you can't buy me, or a Coco-Cola."

All this, and in delightfully Yiddish accented English, too.

Cohen came up with an ingenious plan: the secretary working for Donovan inside the Spanish Embassy would damage the combination mechanism of the safe without leaving marks by using a rubber hammer. The call to the safe repair company would be routed directly to Cohen who would then come to "fix" the safe.

Once inside the embassy, he asked the attaché for the combination, and then "repaired" the safe, informing the Spaniard that he had set a new permutation. Now, the American and British had the combination of the safe holding the cipher machine.

On July 29, 1942, a team of sleuths broke into the embassy to open the safe and break the codes. But all hell broke loose when the FBI descended on the embassy and arrested the intruders. It was a catastrophe. (We now know that it was J. Edgar Hoover, master of the corrupt FBI, who betrayed Allied intelligence agencies, as he deeply resented the emergence of the OSS as a rival. This was high treason, pure and simple, but Hoover was so powerful that even President Franklin Roosevelt declined to get involved.) The spies were hastily assigned overseas to prevent the FBI from further damaging national security.

> *Luckily for the Allies, the Spaniards thought the matter was a simple case of burglary*

Luckily for the Allies, the Spaniards thought the matter was a simple case of burglary, no locked safes had been compromised and the cipher machine remained untouched. As a result of the successful operation, OSS and MI-6 started to read everything between the embassy and Madrid. As Antony Cave Brown wrote, "Before (Operation) Torch, the Spanish telegrams showed that Franco was uneasy and undecided, but he would not permit Germany to have free passage unless Spanish territories were attacked. He would remain neutral."

Knowing that Spain would not intervene in support of Nazi Germany was the single most important factor in the decision to launch the invasion. Moreover, the messages showed that Spain did not know where exactly the landings would take place in North Africa. If Madrid did not know, it was safe to assume that Berlin also was in the dark. This was invaluable intelligence, as Germany still had sufficient forces to repel an invasion if they knew the time and location.

The successful Allied landings in North Africa and the British victory at El-Alamein, both in November 1942, signalled the beginning of the end for Hitler's Reich. Indeed, Hermann Goering, the Nazi head of the Luftwaffe, admitted during the Nuremberg trials that it was Franco who had cost Germany the war.

We do not know what happened to Cohen, the silent hero of Operation Torch, after this episode. We assume he continued to work as a locksmith in New York and indulge in his ornithological passion. ■

Erol Araf lives in Montreal.

Healthy Aging

Your next doctor appointment will likely be virtual

Dr. Vivien Brown

Last September, I wrote to you about virtual care and how telemedicine was becoming more and more important to the Canadian public as there was, and is, a shortage of family doctors. The article was about the value of seeing a health-care professional online, without travel time. The research on the quality of care and communication has been seen to be positive for both the doctor and the patient. While not purely theoretical at that time, there was no sense of urgency for most of us. Rather, virtual care was thought to be convenient and a good alternative for the Canadian public.

That landscape has been altered irrevocably by the emergence and devastation of COVID-19. With the clear public health directives of staying home, maintaining a social distance and the need to practise various degrees of isolation, virtual care or telemedicine is no longer elective. Rather than being a reasonable option, it is suddenly the absolute norm, the necessity, the first step in accessing medical care.

Family doctors are often thought of as the gatekeepers in our system of health care. With the patient as a partner, we evaluate a given condition or concern, decide if a specialty consult is needed, which laboratory tests or imaging are required and, finally, whether the condition needs treatment and what form that may take. A prescription? Physiotherapy? Surgical intervention? What is the next step for the patient?

In the last few weeks, as we try to have patients visit either by phone or on a secure website for a face-to-face experience, we are all learning the incredible value of virtual care. I have talked with patients privately by phone and online. We have discussed issues from elevated levels of cholesterol and their impact on cardiac risk to an evaluation of acne, with clear pictures and dialogue. We have managed anxiety, urinary infections, early pregnancy questions and upper respiratory issues. Medication monitoring, including renewals, questions, changes of dose, duration and intervals have all been managed virtually. More than 80 per cent of patient visits have been successfully negotiated online. I believe both the patients and the health-care professional feel gratified with the interaction, satisfied that public health directives are being followed and that, overall, there is a significant sense of safety in maintaining a social distance with decreased exposure. Yes, we are still the gatekeepers, but part of that "gate" now includes deciding whether an in-office visit is necessary.

Things that cannot be done online include some areas of examination that involve gynecology, such as a Pap test or prenatal examinations, or an ear exam. Infants need to be seen to have their routine immunization on time and as required, so that they are protected personally and so that we, society, do not risk a measles outbreak or infant deaths from pertussis. Other preventive measures, such as screening for colon cancer, can be delayed, as recommended by public health officials, but eventually will require in-office visits. Immunization to prevent various cancers related to HPV and immunization to prevent shingles are being delayed for the moment, but will require more than virtual visits in the near future.

In this new world we now face, there are many tools and many options that we need to consider to help maintain our best health. While public health organizations are helping us with day-to-day directives, it is time for all of us to be creative, thoughtful and open to new opportunities in the health-care environment. Virtual care is an efficacious tool, one of the options to help protect patients and their families, doctors and their staff, and the health-care system itself as we work diligently to ease the incredible burdens on our system.

So what does this all mean for you? Well, it is really time to become more comfortable with your computer, your email and your phone. There is a good chance your next appointment with your doctor will be online, so let's get ready, Canada. This is how we will stay connected. This is how we stay well. This is how we protect our families and ourselves. ■

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Percy Lyons	Mar 26/20	117 Scenic Millway
Ariella Zoe Saperia	Mar 28/20	163 Pinewood Avenue
Carol Freedman	Mar 27/20	150 Heath Street
Ryan Stossel-Stairs	Mar 28/20	550 Hopewell Avenue
Inessa Isakova	Mar 28/20	20 Water Street
Sidney Burns	Mar 29/20	700 Wilson Road North
Elinor Grill	Mar 29/20	7 Gale Cres
Gloria Victor	Mar 30/20	22 Norfinch Dr.

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